THE

LAST YEARS OF LOUIS XV.

The Publication Committee of THE CLUB OF ODD VOLUMES *certify that this Copy is one of an Edition of One Hundred and Fifty Copies printed on Holland Hand-made Paper, and this Copy is No.* 133

Chairman.

Photogravure Goupil & Cie

Printed by GOUPIL & Cie of PARIS, for the CLUB OF ODD VOLUMES

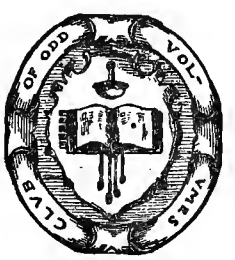
THE

LAST YEARS OF LOUIS XV.

Translated from the French

OF

IMBERT DE SAINT-AMAND



BOSTON

THE CLUB OF ODD VOLUMES

1893

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Photogravure. Goupil & Cº

Printed by GOUPIL & Cº of PARIS, for the CLUB OF ODD VOLUMES.

THE LAST YEARS OF LOUIS XV.

PART FIRST.

COURT AND CITY AT THE CLOSE OF THE REIGN OF LOUIS XV.

TO live the life of those who are no more, to study an epoch thoroughly, to identify one's self with the persons, and familiarize one's self with their customs, their modes of thought, their passions, their tastes, their fashions, their prejudices, is in itself a sort of metempsychosis.

In order to accomplish that purpose, one must detach himself from his own epoch, and, forgetting his own identity, imagine that he is somebody else. At first you pay but slight attention to the details of the memoirs of the time which you are studying, to the minutiæ of all sorts which are only to be discerned, so to speak, with the aid of a magnifying-glass. But after a little, all the petty gossip and tittle-tattle of the day begin to fascinate you, and you seem to live again in a recreated past. It seems as if you were intimately acquainted with the original actors in the drama of which you are having a performance all by yourself. You fancy that you hear their voices, watch the play of their features, and you become for the nonce the courtier

à la mode, the subscriber to the theatres, and the *habitué* of the *salons* which you are trying to restore in all their former glory.

It is something like that which I propose to myself to try and do for the last years of Louis XV., — those six years, from the death of the good Queen Marie Leczinska, to that of the monarch himself, who was no longer, except by antiphrasis, the "Well-Beloved." It is a period made interesting by the striking contrasts which it offers to the view, by the uncertain conflict between the old *régime*, which was just tottering in the last stages of debility, and the new order of things, which was still in an embryotic state. French society, with no regret for the past, and no fear for the future, was dancing and singing on towards the abyss.

I try to imagine that instead of being an obscure man of letters of the nineteenth century, I am a courtier of the eighteenth; that I am an eye-witness of the triumph of Madame du Barry; that I saw Madame Louise of France take the veil as a Carmelite nun; and that I have been present at the bedside reception of that rising star who was called Marie-Antoinette. I doat upon Versailles, where the monarchy, even in its decadence, retains some little prestige; but I much prefer Paris, — Paris, the fountain-head of public opinion, the city of luxury and intellect and pleasure. I live with the *philosophes*, though I distrust their doctrines, of which they do not appreciate the inevitable result. At Versailles a courtier of Louis XV., at Paris I am the intimate friend of the kings and queens of fashion. I frequent

the *salon* of the Marquise du Deffand without getting myself into hot water with Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. At Madame Geoffrin's I meet those great nobles, men of understanding and taste, who, by mingling freely with authors and artists, establish a fusion between the aristocracy and men of letters, and those foreign diplomatists who do not conceal their infatuation with the advanced civilization of France, — of Paris above all.

I am a welcome guest at those charming supper-parties where one forgets, for a moment, everything that is sad or gloomy in life, and thinks only of that which is soothing and pleasant.

I dip into politics a bit at my leisure; and when the Duc de Choiseul falls from power, I pose as his warm adherent, and go to write my name with the rest upon the pillar at Chanteloup. The disputes between the magistracy and the clergy also possess interest for me; but I do not take them so tragically as some.

I see society divided into two hostile camps, — pessimists and optimists; those who believe in the threatening danger, and those who laugh at it. But the last are vastly in the majority. The former declare that if the foundations of the altar are shaken, those upon which the throne is built may be no more solid. They regret the expulsion of the Jesuits; they are loud in their condemnation of Voltaire. The future looks very black to them; they are the true prophets of evil. The others smile when one gives sign of fear.

When they have uttered the words "toleration," "equality,"

"liberty," they think they have said all there is to be said. They scoff at the Cassandras foretelling public disaster, at the priests who wring their hands over the prevailing incredulity, at Louis XV. gazing uneasily at the portrait of Charles I. of England. How absurd the thought that a loyal, chivalrous nation, such a nation as the French, could ever send its anointed king to the scaffold! Is not society becoming every day more moderate in tone, more enlightened and more tolerant? Are not the old religious disputes falling into desuetude? Is not the nobility taking the lead in a free and liberal movement? Have not the priests become socially as eligible as worldly people? Is not education making marvellous progress every day.

When had literature greater prestige? Was there ever a time when liberal ideas, desire for useful reforms, and plans looking to the extension of civilization were more fashionable? Is not science, which brings to light new marvels every day, joining hands with the new philosophy to benefit, to pacify, and to regenerate the human race?

And it is such an epoch as this that you would characterize as a time given over to confusion, to anarchy, and to bloody revolution!

"Back, ye waverers!" cry the *philosophes*. "Back, ye men of former days, who would enchain and degrade mankind! Nothing, no, nothing, will impede the irresistible movement which is drawing France, and all Europe in her wake, on in the path of progress towards indefinable, boundless perfection. Lay aside these cowardly arguments,

these imaginary alarms, this terror fit only for children, or old men in their dotage. All the spectres which you evoke will not terrify us. Your phantasmagoria only makes us laugh. In vain do you raise your voice to frighten us with your tragic threats and your gloomy predictions. Back, back, ye waverers! The world is moving on, and you cannot stop it!"

I listen to this torrent of fine words, but I confess that they are not altogether convincing to me; I have not such a firm belief as that in the approach of the Golden Age. "After me, the deluge," cried Louis XV., they say, in Madame Du Barry's boudoir. Louis XV. sees no good augury for the future, and it may be that he is right.

And I, who am whirled about in the vortex of society; I, who am in the thick of that excited, feverish, brilliant life, the life of the court and the city, of *salons* and boudoirs, of academies and theatres; I, who am of all the supper-parties, all the *fêtes*, and an indefatigable first-nighter; I, the friend of all the great lords and famous men, of all the fashionable beauties, — I too have, in common with the old king, my moments of depression and discouragement. Sometimes all these men and women whom I meet in society seem to me, as to the old Marquise du Deffand, "like mere machines, who go and come, chatter and laugh, without thought or reflection or emotion, playing each his part mechanically and from long habit." Mere worldly creatures, outwardly earnest and enthusiastic, but really indifferent to everything; spiteful allusions, upon which jealousy and

idleness feed and thrive; insipid love-making, which is a mere burlesque of passion; everlasting disquisitions upon love and friendship pronounced by those who never have known, and never will know, more than the theory of those sentiments; selfish, lukewarm alliances, growing out of the artificial life of the *salons*, — yes, there are times when you weary me beyond measure, and the mere thought of you is horrible to me. There are moments when I say to myself, "Where will this rage for philosophy end? What sort of a structure will rise over all this ruin? What will become of the throne without the altar, of the nobility without the clergy? What will come of this Tower of Babel called the Encyclopédie?'"

And, after all, what a world of sadness really lies hidden beneath this mask of gayety! What emptiness and wretchedness! How bitter is the flavor at the bottom of these cups of crystal! How many thorns among the roses, and how many bitter cares beneath these powdered wigs! Ye brilliant beauties, what lines of anguish are drawn on your rouge-laden cheeks!

O eighteenth century, which vaunted so proudly thy intellect, thy boldness, and thy alleged progress; century of philosophers, of learned great ladies, of noblemen turned artists, of omnipotent wielders of the pen; century of Rousseau and Voltaire, of Diderot and Helvétius, — thou eighteenth century, now drawing to a close, what will thy last years be?

But a truce to gloomy forebodings. I cry, with Horace

Walpole, "I laugh so, that I need not weep. I play with monkeys and dogs and cats, to avoid being devoured by the beast of Gévaudan." Let us then, since there is still time, taste the sweets of life and emotion. Let us scrutinize without prejudice this society which has so much that is charming and alluring, with all its faults and vices. Court and city, nobility, clergy, magistracy, *bourgeoisie*, common people, *philosophes*, men of letters, women, — yes, the women above all; let us pass them in review one after another, the actors and supernumeraries of a comedy which will end, soon it may be, with the most pathetic and sombre of imaginable scenes. The new world comes on apace; let us cast a last glance upon the old.

I.

THE KING.

TOWARDS the close of the reign of Louis XV. the court was out of fashion. To be sure, the old etiquette was in force there, and one found the same old names and the same distinctions of caste. But the king was old, and, more than that, the king was ridiculous. His passion for a mere courtesan, for a Du Barry, had in it something absurd and pitiably grotesque. Versailles no longer trembled before him, but laughed at him. They made sport of the amorous monarch who was playing an out-of-date pastoral comedy with a harlot. The "Well-beloved of the Almance," as he was satirically called, was no longer taken seriously.

In 1771 some joker circulated this version of the Lord's Prayer, dedicated to His Most Christian Majesty: "Our Father who art at Versailles, hallowed be thy name: thy reign is played out, and thy will is no more done in earth than in heaven. Give back to us our daily bread, which thou hast taken away; forgive thy Parliaments who have upheld thy interests, as thou hast forgiven thy ministers who have betrayed them. Yield no more to the temptations of the Du Barry, but deliver us from thy devil of a chancellor." Affairs at Versailles, however, are still conducted as deco-

rously as of yore. The gentlemen on duty fulfil the functions of their respective offices with the same assiduity. The king's levee is still a farce in five acts, in which the courtiers appear as supernumeraries of high degree. There are still the *entrées familières*, when the king is awake, but still in bed; the *grandes entrées*, when he has risen and donned his dressing-gown; then the so-called *entrées de la chambre*, when he is seated in his arm-chair at the toilette-table; and, lastly, the general *entrée*, which admits the common herd of courtiers, who have been waiting since dawn in the *Galerie des Glaces*.

Versailles is still, as of old, a city of eighty thousand souls, filled and dominated by the life of a single man, — an essentially royal city, marvellously well adapted to supply the service, the pleasures, the body-guard, and the society of the sovereign. The immortal race of courtiers is unceasingly recruited from the clever and compliant men who, upon making their *début* at court, have received this advice, and followed it to the letter: "You have but three things to do, — speak well of everybody, apply for every vacant post, and sit down whenever you can."

But all these courtiers, in spite of their irreproachable demeanor, resemble priests who have ceased to believe in their god. Quantities of incense are still burned at the idol's feet, through force of habit; but the idol hardly deceives anybody now. Etiquette, which is still enforced in all its tedious regulations, is a custom simply; it is no longer a cult. Prestige has disappeared. No successor to Dangeau

or to De Luynes is to be found; moreover, money, the vital principle of courts, is becoming less plentiful. Horace Walpole writes, on the 30th July, 1771: "There is incredible distress here, especially at court; the king's tradesmen are ruined; his servants are dying of hunger; the angels and archangels themselves would fail to receive their pensions or salaries. So they are singing, 'Woe! Woe! Woe!' instead of 'Hosannah!' Compiègne is abandoned. Villers-Cotterets and Chantilly are crowded. Chanteloup is even more in vogue.* Every one goes there who chooses, although, when the king's permission is asked, the invariable reply is, 'I say neither yes nor no.' It is the first time that the will of a king of France has ever been interpreted against his meaning. After abolishing the Parliament and destroying the public credit, he meekly submits to the slights of his personal attendants. Madame de Beauvau and two or three other ladies of an enterprising character defy this Tsar of the Gauls."

Walpole takes care to add that the insubordination of these ladies is really of no serious importance. "It must be said that they and their intrigues have about as little cohesive power as their party. They make *épigrammes*, sing *vaudevilles* aimed at the favorite, and distribute pamphlets against the Chancellor Maupeou; but all this has no more result than a shot fired in the air."

* Villers-Cotterets and Chantilly were the seats of the Duc d'Orléans and Prince de Condé, who were then in disgrace for taking sides with the former Parliament of Paris against the Chancellor Maupeou. Chanteloup was the place of exile of the Duc de Choiseul.

To sum up, people retain for the king, if not affection and respect, — they have long since ceased to exist, — a certain indulgent feeling. They make excuses for the old fellow as they might do for a spoiled child. He has done wrong, perhaps; but then he has done some good too. He has lost the colonies; but he has annexed Lorraine and Corsica to France. He has held his own against powerful coalitions. He is the victor of Fontenoy. His old arm has been strong enough to smite the Parliament; and that *coup d'état* postponed the final catastrophe for some years.

Louis XV., pious and debauched, discontented with others as with himself, a curious compound of indecision and energy, of heedlessness and common-sense; Louis XV., retaining still something of dignity and quiet good-breeding, of the demeanor befitting a gentleman and a sovereign; Louis XV., to be pitied rather than blamed, it may be, — is the type of the old *régime*, the incarnation of the monarchy, which, notwithstanding its visible decay, has clung to some fragments of attractiveness and of strength and authority.

He is a confirmed debauchee, no doubt; but, after all, he is no better or worse than so many gray-haired Céladons, so many veterans of Cythera and superannuated rakes, who would think their vital spark was extinct if they ceased to have mistresses. Even learned magistrates play such pranks sometimes. They have their little houses, their boudoirs, their temples of pleasure. The eighteenth century, epicurean at heart, is only half indignant with the royal gallantry.

It laughs at it, and the monarchical principle is assailed much less by direct attack than by a weapon more formidable, perhaps, — ridicule. When I see Louis XV. at mass in the chapel at Versailles, praying very earnestly in the royal gallery, not far from his unworthy favorite, — who is without paint or powder, and has not even made her toilet, — I have difficulty in repressing a contemptuous exclamation.

As for the old king, proud as a peacock of his victory over Parliament, he thinks that he has, by a master-stroke, assured himself a long and peaceable old age. In his own mind he gives himself several more years of dissipation. Then, he tells himself, the time for repentance will come; then he will repent and be truly devout, and will be the most Christian king, otherwise than in name. How many old rakes there are who thus postpone the hour of their final conversion, while boasting of an inborn, if somewhat hypocritical, respect for religion! This half piety, this rough draught of virtue, this penitence dependent upon a future contingency, we find in many souls. Is there aught more feeble or inconsequent than the nature of man? We rub elbows with such as Louis XV. every hour of our lives. Men with his proclivities almost all resemble the lover of the Du Barry, when they grow old; and examples are very rare of such men who, while their health is intact and money plentiful, will consent to become hermits, notwithstanding their gray hairs.

The prevailing sentiment with regard to the king is not so much hatred as indifference. He will be allowed to die

in peace, and his subjects will be content to look on, with no emotion of any sort, at the setting of this winter sun which gives neither heat nor light. Some there are who sigh impatiently for a new reign to begin. Wise heads consider the future Louis XVI. too young. After all, Louis XV., despite his mistakes, his defects, and his vicious habits, is a man of experience, and skilled in the science of government. But when will the Dauphin possess the necessary knowledge? How much time will be required to teach him the most elementary principles of that difficult art, the art of reigning? He will have the best intentions; he will be honorable, upright, and virtuous. But all that is not enough. The task will be a heavy one for young shoulders. For this reason, Maria Theresa, woman of genius that she is, and endowed with keen and accurate vision, fears nothing so much as the death of Louis XV., the much-decried monarch. As king, if not as man, the oldster was worth much more than the child.

II.

THE NOBILITY.

THERE are two parties in the nobility, — conservatives and liberals; men of the past, and men of the future. The former are firm in support of the alliance between throne and altar, and insist upon respectful observance of all the old customs, and the rigid maintenance of the formalities of etiquette. Irreconcilable foes of the new philosophy, of Anglomania, and the "Encyclopédie," they look with a scornful and angry eye upon the changes in dress, the disuse of liveries, and the rage for foreign fashions. The liberals, combining with the advantages of patrician birth the charm of a life of independence, joyfully adopt the cabriolets, the dress-coats, and the simple English fashions. They applaud the republican declamations at the theatres, the levelling discourses of the academies, the anti-Christian theories of the *philosophes*. They treat the old social edifice as architecture of the Gothic style. Their own social privileges, the remnants of their own former prestige, are being dug from beneath their feet; but what matters it? This "little war," as the Comte de Ségur says, both pleases and entertains them. They do not yet feel the danger, they see only the spectacle. Slaves of the prevailing fashion, they

rush to pay their court to D'Alembert, Diderot, Marmontel, or Raynal, — a word of praise from whose mouth they esteem more highly than the favor of a prince of the blood.

Equality begins to make its appearance in the world. On many occasions literary eminence takes precedence of titles of nobility. One often sees, in the first society, men of letters of the second or third rate treated with more deference and consideration than is bestowed upon the provincial nobility. But do not be misled; all this democratic, almost republican, show is as yet only an optical illusion. The old customs — so says the same liberal authority, the Comte de Ségur — still maintain between nobles and *bourgeoisie* a tremendous gulf, which mere talents, even the most distinguished, only seem to cross. There is more familiarity than equality. Great trees, which lose their roots whether they will or no, are none the less proud of their foliage. So splendid ancestry, magnificent establishments, feudal ways of life, attributes of former power, — all these seem fated to live forever. The castes of the old social *régime*, with their proud hierarchy, their splendid display, their heraldic blazonry, their opulence and their power, are like "those gorgeous pictures of a thousand hues, drawn with sand upon glass, where one can see and admire superb castles, smiling landscapes, and bounteous harvests, which it needs but the lightest breath to blow away."

Do not think, however, that the nobility has lost all its former prestige, despite its decadence. No, it still retains its loyalty, its refinement, and its courteous manners and

breeding The least of the provincial squires preserve its traditions. They have frequented the *salon* of the commandant, or intendant, and have met some ladies from Versailles, visiting in the provinces. Thus are they, almost all, acquainted with the changing fashions and customs.

"The most unpolished will go down to the lowest step of his porch, hat in hand, to escort his guests to their carriage, thanking them for the honor they have done him. The most boorish, when with a lady, will hunt up in his memory some fragments of the gallantry of the days of chivalry. The poorest and most secluded will furbish up his coat of king's blue, and his cross of Saint Louis, that he may be able, on occasion, to pay his respects to his neighbor, the great lord of the neighborhood, or to the prince on his travels." *

The nobility of the court, frivolous, dissipated, and *Voltairian*, must not make us lose sight of the provincial nobility, who live in austere tranquillity, respecting the principles, customs, and tenets of their class, bearing honorable poverty without a murmur rather than beg favors at Versailles, and making ready, in their retirement, to meet with noble resolution the tempests of which they can already foresee the approach.

* M. Taine, "Les Origines de la France contemporaine." One volume. Hachette.

III.

THE CLERGY.

JUST as we find in the ranks of the aristocracy, by the side of the nobly born courtiers who too often lead corrupt and useless lives, a provincial nobility faithful to their honorable traditions and to morality and virtue, so there are to be found beside the worldly, corrupt prelates, priests who lead honorable and respectable lives of sincere piety, and who set an edifying example to their countrymen.

In the body of the clergy, as in the nobility, I distinguish between the rich and the poor, the scoffers and the true believers, the men whose whole lives are a scandal, and those who strive to do what is right. Doubtless there are many reforms to be desired, many abuses to be put down. The princes of the Church, vested with feudal prerogatives, the heirs or successors of the former sovereign princes of the country; the hundred and thirty-one bishops and archbishops, the seven hundred *abbés commendataires*, with their fashionable manners, their great wealth, and their luxurious establishments, — are not all models of morality. I might name more than one prelate who not only has his mistresses, his hangers-on, his select boon-companions, his morning reception, his crowded ante-chamber, and his ushers and

household officers, but who is also deeply in debt; thereby putting the finishing touch to the parallel between himself and the great nobles.

The Marquis de Mirabeau writes in 1766: "It would be looked upon as insulting by the majority of the ecclesiastics with pretensions, simply to suggest to them to take charge of a parish. The salaries and preferments are for the *abbés commendataires*, for the incumbents who have received the tonsure without taking orders, or for the numerous chapters." There are churchmen who have an income of half a million. One hears mention of the hunting-stable of this bishop, of the satin-trimmed confessionals of another, and of the superb solid silver kitchen outfit of a third. I meet at every turn in the *salons* or *boudoirs* of the ladies of fashion these mincing court *abbés* who have nothing of the priest save the dress, and who do not always wear that, — these anacreontic *abbés*, compliant friends of the *grandes dames*, worshippers at the footstool of the *philosophes*, purveyors of scandal, and scribblers of frivolous verses. But they are not the clergy properly so-called. The real clergy are to be found in the unpretending vicarages of the cities and villages, — above all, in the latter. Yes, although I know the prelate who plays the great lord, who leads a life of luxurious idleness, frequenter of *salons* and the court, and who mounts the steps of the marble stairway at Versailles with much more alacrity than he shows in mounting the steps of the altar, I know also the humble, poor, all-enduring priest, the pattern of devotion, of self-sacrifice, and faithfulness to duty, — the

veritable man of God. Although I meet the bishop exulting in his golden cross, so do I reverently salute the country curate who walks leagues upon leagues in the mud or the snow, staff in hand. There are, without doubt, some female convents which are so tainted with worldliness that they seem like centres of the fashionable aristocracy; but there are, on the other hand, real convents, the abode of true piety and saintly devotion.

One of the daughters of Louis XV., Madame Louise de France, becomes a Carmelite; and the daughters of the order of Mount Carmel make no terms with half-hearted piety. There do exist, I know, certain preachers who are more engrossed in the "Encyclopédie" than in the holy Gospels, and who more nearly resemble Academicians than priests. There are some, too, — so I am told, — who forget to make the sign of the cross when they ascend the pulpit, who entirely omit all forms of prayer, and make their sermon a sort of conference with their hearers. Bachaumont tells us that that is called preaching *à la grecque*. But there are, on the other hand, energetic, impassioned preachers, on whose eloquent lips the sacred terrors of the doctrine of the Church lose none of their force; men of faith and courage, who, like the apostles, cry out, in view of the scandalous tendencies of the age: "*Non possumus non loqui*," — "We cannot keep silence." In a sermon remarkable for its saintlike courage, the Bishop of Alais divides society into two classes, — one which has everything, the other nothing, — and demands to

know what justification there can be for the possession of illimitable privilege by those whose virtue is infinitesimal.

One day, the Abbé de Beauvais, preaching in the chapel of the palace at Versailles, spoke in terms of severe censure, before the king himself, of the shameful life of the gray-bearded libertines. At the close of the sermon Louis XV. said to that old sot, the Maréchal de Richelieu: "Well, Maréchal, I should say the preacher has been throwing stones into your garden."

"Yes, Sire," rejoined the malicious courtier, "and one or two of his missiles rebounded into the park of Versailles."

The evangelical traditions are maintained, in spite of everything. Even in the most heedless, the most corrupt and vicious epochs, there are always — and if not on the surface, in the depths of society — hidden treasures, inexhaustible springs of love and virtue. No, no, *Messieurs les Philosophes*, do not confound the Church, the Holy Church, with a few simoniacal priests, a few contraband *abbés*, who are its bane.

Do but count up all those who are still to be found in the city and country, in every market-town, in every hamlet, of faithful servants of Christ, bringing succor to the needy, and comfort to the afflicted. There are, to be sure, grave scandals and crying abuses, at which Christian souls deeply grieve. And yet you will see, when the supreme crisis arrives, how many priests will have the strength and courage to meet death like the early Christian martyrs.

You, who believe that the clergy are done with forever, will soon be lost in wonder, perhaps, to see how many heroic and fearless men it can boast. During the storm which is at hand you will realize what this ridiculed, decried religion is, how great its worth and its power. You think now that the Church is in a state of decay. But persecution will bring back its youth, if necessary. It will be rebaptized; and its second baptism, which will wash out every stain, will be a baptism of blood.

IV.

THE MAGISTRACY.

THE same contrasts which I find in the nobility and the clergy are repeated in the magistracy. Beside magistrates of the old-fashioned temper, sober-minded and severe, devoted to tradition, obeying the dictates of duty, and conscious of the dignity of their profession, I am grieved to observe epicurean brethren, disciples of Voltaire, intriguing devotees of pleasure, superficial and frivolous, partisans of revolutionary ideas, and preparing the way, unknown to themselves, for the overturning of throne and altar alike, with no suspicion of the serious nature of the blows they are dealing at the foundations of society. They are only in appearance the defenders of law and order; in reality they are nothing better than active agents of their subversion. They do not even take the pains to be hypocritical about it. The same men who send Calas to the wheel, and La Barre to the scaffold, keep a copy of Voltaire's "Pucelle" upon their drawing-room tables, and are the intimate friends and flatterers of the materialists, the atheists. If a book is ordered to be burned, the sentence brings a smile to the lips of the magistrate who utters it.

"They inveigh against the decrees," says Bachaumont; "a bright saying is a sufficient answer to a sermon; and if Parliament intervenes, they congratulate themselves on the honor of having the book burned."

It is no longer looked upon as a punishment, but as an advertisement. Do not imagine, either, that monsieur the executioner of noble works of the pen is allowed to cast into the fire those books whose titles appear in the decree of the court. "Messieurs the magistrates would be very sorry to deprive their libraries of a copy of each of those works, which will come to them in due course; so the clerk supplies their place with some wretched, paltry volumes which no one will ever miss." *

These parliamentarians, who occupy a position midway between the greatest nobles and the *bourgeoisie;* who are wealthy, influential, allied to the most powerful families in France; these great lords of the robe, each one of whom has his own little Versailles, — a fine mansion, with court-yard and garden, — and who are to the main body of the magistracy what the prelates are to the clergy, — these leading spirits of the Parliament gradually become formidable foes of the Monarchy.

Louis XV. holds them in holy horror. From the time of Madame de Pompadour he has looked upon them as enemies, and the most to be dreaded of all.

"These great gentlemen of the robe," he said one day to the favorite, "are always at daggers drawn with the

* Grimm, Correspondance Littéraire, 1773.

clergy; they drive me to distraction with their quarrelling; but I despise the gentlemen of the robe much the more. My clergy are in their hearts devoted and faithful to me, while the others would like to keep me under guardianship. The Regent was very ill-advised to restore their right of remonstrating; they will end by destroying the State."

"Ah, Sire," rejoined M. de Gontant, "the State is much too powerful to be demoralized by such little wretches as they."

"You have no idea of their capacity for ill," replied the king; "it is an assemblage of republicans. But never mind; things will endure in their present state as long as I live."

Confusion is already rife in the governing class. Montesquieu wrote: "There are in France three estates, — the Church, the sword, and the robe. Each of the three has a sovereign contempt for the other two."

One of Louis' ministers for Foreign Affairs, the Marquis d'Argenson, has predicted the inevitable outcome of this *régime* of dissension, of unceasing conflict of power.

"What will be the reply in the future," he wrote, "to the question whether despotism shall flourish or be put down in France? For my own part, I am for the second course, — I even hope for the advent of republicanism. Louis XV. has not succeeded in governing tyrannically, or as the head of a republic; and in this land, when one does not assume either the one or the other of those characters, woe to royal prestige! The people have become

excellent critics of the parliaments, and see in them only the cure for the annoyance which they suffer from another direction. All this portends a revolution smouldering under the ashes."

It was in 1752 that the same Marquis d'Argenson penned the following prophetic lines: "The wretched fruits of our absolute monarchy are sure to demonstrate to France and to all Europe that it is the very worst of all possible forms of government. I do not mean to say, with the *philosophes*, that even anarchy would be better. However, that opinion is making rapid headway, and may end by producing a national revolution."

An earnest and militant opposition has been directed against the Church in the very bosom of Catholicism, and against the royal power among the nobility of the robe and the parliamentary *bourgeoisie.* A species of league has been formed by all the Parliaments in France, which look upon themselves as constituent parts of a single assembly, as the joint and several members of an indivisible body. Louis XV., surprisingly energetic at times, awakes from his torpor, and realizes the need of striking a vigorous blow. During the night of the 19th of January, 1771, all those members of the Parliament of Paris who, in a spirit of opposition, have refused to fulfil their functions, are arrested in their houses, and required to reply "Yes" or "No" to a royal command to resume their customary duties. They reply, "No," and are exiled.

The people remain impassive, and the dissolved Parlia-

ment makes way, without resistance, for the new one, — called, from the name of the chancellor, the Parliament Maupeou. Louis XV. believes himself to be more powerful than Louis XIV., and the chancellor mightier than Richelieu. Madame de Pompadour overthrew the Jesuits; Madame Du Barry overthrows the parliamentary party, — that is to say, the Jansenists. The two rival factions, Jesuit and Jansenist, having disappeared, would one not believe that absolute monarchy remains standing alone and unshaken upon their ruins?

But it is only an optical delusion. The Parliament Maupeou is discredited from the start, and is sustained with but little vigor by the power which created it. It allows the affair of Beaumarchais against the Counsellor Goëzman — an affair of most trifling importance in itself, but momentous in its consequences — to assume incredible proportions. The Polish question, dramatic and terrible, engrosses the attention of Versailles and Paris less than this wretched quarrel between the author of the "Barbier de Séville" and one of his judges, or, to speak more accurately, the wife of one of his judges.

What was the point at issue? Whether or not the wife of a Counsellor of the Parliament retained the sum of fifteen louis received from a litigant. Whence, pray, so much public interest and passion? Why this feverish anxiety, this insane curiosity, with which all Paris, — indeed, all France, — follows the trivialities of this lawsuit? Because it is a symbolical episode. The subject of inves-

tigation is not so much the domestic economy of the Goëzman household as the Parliament Maupeou as a whole. Upon the culprit's stool I seem to see, not Beaumarchais, but the magistracy. He it is, he, the defendant, who, by an interchange of characters, appears as the king's prosecutor — what do I say? — as the prosecutor, rather, of the new-born power, public opinion. His statements become the public prosecutor's address to the court. The cause is a political quite as much as a judicial one. All parts of the old social structure are honeycombed and mined. All the springs of the old machine are getting out of order one by one. And instead of weeping, the privileged classes do nothing but laugh. The Goëzman lawsuit is a comedy, in which the proscenium boxes find as much amusement as the pit.

I am not sure that Louis XV. himself — even Louis XV., so hard as he is to amuse — does not unbend somewhat over it; certainly Madame Du Barry gets a vast amount of sport out of it. She has proverbs acted in her apartments, in which Madame Goëzman and Beaumarchais are brought face to face. Beaumarchais is the cynosure of every eye, he has become the fashionable lion, the hero of the hour.

"I am afraid," writes Voltaire, "that this brilliant hothead is right against all the world. His *naïveté* enchants me (the *naïveté* of Beaumarchais!). I forgive him his imprudence and petulance."

The conclusion of the most serious of all affairs, a most

momentous treaty of peace, would be awaited less impatiently than is the result of this lawsuit, which fills the thoughts, incredible as it may seem, of many nations and many kings, to so great a degree does France, even in her decline, preserve the faculty, in these closing years of Louis XV., of attracting the attention of all Europe to anything which takes place within her borders! "Judgment at last!" as Chicaneau says in Racine's "Plaideurs." On the 26th of February, 1774, after seven months of expectation, the decree is pronounced. Madame Goëzman is condemned to be reprimanded, and to make restitution of the fifteen louis, to be distributed among the poor. And Beaumarchais, too, is condemned to be reprimanded.

To be reprimanded! It is no trifling punishment, but an infamous one, and renders him who undergoes it, ineligible for public employment. The culprit receives the sentence on his knees before the court, the president addressing him thus: "The court reprimands you, and declares you infamous." Oh, well! The man whom the Parliament Maupeou fancied that it could thus brand with infamy, is throned in triumph, and all Paris hastens to write its name upon the convict's visitor's book. The Prince de Conti and the Duc de Chartres give a great banquet for him, the day after the sentence; M. de Sartine says to him: "It is not enough to be reprimanded, you must be modest too."

The opposition, nodding for an instant, awakes with energy renewed. Pamphlets and diatribes begin again

to rain down upon the Parliament Maupeou, which, by the very act of inflicting civil death upon a man whom public opinion idolized, has dealt itself a mortal blow. Its days, like those of the old king, are numbered. As for Louis XV., basing his opinion of Beaumarchais upon the address which the clever fellow has shown in the Goëzman matter, he intrusts him with a secret mission to England.

When such discordant notes are heard in society, the catastrophe is not far away.

V.

THE BOURGEOISIE.

AN extraordinary fact is that the Revolution has its origin in the higher ranks of society; that it works down, not up. The suffering classes, the hungry classes, are submissive and silent. The privileged classes, on the other hand, — those who, amid the public distress, are gorged with gold and debauchery, are the ones who whine and complain. The higher you mount in the social scale, the less virtue and true faith do you find. The common people are better than the *bourgeoisie*, the *bourgeoisie* better than the nobility; the provincial nobles are more estimable than those of the court, the lower orders of the priesthood than the prelates. One would say that morality, being in inverse ratio to rank, the most formidable foes of society are the very ones who have the most to lose if it goes under. The great landed proprietors are demolishing their own mansions and *châteaux*. The prelates are sapping the underpinning of the Church. The princes of the blood are shaking the throne. It is in this way that the self-styled defenders of the social fortress are spiking their guns, levelling their breastworks, dampening their powder, shattering their weapons, and will eventually end by delivering the key of the citadel to the enemy.

The great mass of the *bourgeoisie* still holds out against the invading forces of impiety. At Paris, as well as in the provinces, the prevailing idea among good citizens of the middle class is still: "Without the Monarchy, and without the Church — anarchy." In religion and in politics, even though they are in the opposition, their demands go no farther than the liberties of the Gallican Church, and the constitutional guarantees thereof demanded by the Parliaments. Even though they have ceased to love and respect Louis XV., they continue to respect in his person the royal idea.

Estimable men, of calm and reflective temperament, they have as little desire to make war upon the nobility as to truckle to them. As for the Monarchy, they look upon it as a dogma, an indispensable portion of their faith.

The *bourgeois* Regnaud thus expresses himself: "It is a law of the realm, sanctioned throughout the ages by the divine command, to respect the sovereign, even when he brings misfortune upon the people whom Providence has intrusted to his care. God forbid that in this narrative which I am writing I should undertake to disregard that sacred law." *

Another *bourgeois*, Prosper Hardy, delivers himself as follows in his Memoirs: "Although I have never regarded myself as anything more than a mere molecule of society, I think that I deserve to occupy an honorable position there by

* MS. *Mémoires* of Regnaud, Procureur of the Parliament of Paris under the *coup d'état* of 1771.

virtue of my unswerving fidelity to my sovereign, and my love for his sacred person. The sentiments which I have imbibed in the course of my education, and in the books which I have read, will never be rooted out of my heart. Although, by God's will, my fortune is of the slightest, the promise of an income of one hundred thousand crowns would not tempt me to give up a possession which is of inestimable value to me, and which cannot be stolen from me, — to wit, the sense of my unblemished honor and my genuine patriotism. I should always consider it my bounden duty to have no other opinions in the present controversies than those held by the first magistrates of the realm and the princes of the blood royal, who have demonstrated their sentiments in no uncertain tone, and with all due respect for our august master, by their solemn protest, to which all good citizens cannot fail to render a tribute of admiration, and to subscribe with all their souls."*

The opposition still hedges itself about with most deferential respect for the person and the authority of the sovereign. Hardy casts the odium for the ill that is done upon the ministers, and makes no charge against Louis XV. He complains of despotism, but never of the king.

Just as one finds in the heart of the provinces old-fashioned manor-houses, castle-keeps blackened by the hand of time, where abide virtuous and estimable gentlemen of the old school, proud of their pedigree and their poverty, so one finds, even in worldly and frivolous Paris, time-worn

* MS. *Mémoires* of Simeon Prosper Hardy.

mansions which shelter honorable folk who lead a tranquil, patriarchal existence, — peaceable *bourgeois*, good citizens of their quarter, regular in their attendance upon parish meetings, and members of their guild.

Their life slips away, a succession of days exactly alike, "following, like a captive stream, the course marked out for it in advance, without ever losing sight of the steeple under whose shadow they were born, of the church where lie the sacred remains of their forbears, and where the same tomb stands open for the generation still to come. In the brief period between the beginning and the end, the prescribed forms of professional duty take possession of the man, furnish occupation for his mind, and fill the measure of his intellect." *

Religious feeling is still uppermost, even at Paris, among the *bourgeoisie* and the common people. In February, 1766, Louis XV. crossed the Pont-Neuf, at the conclusion of a Bed of Justice which he had held in the palace of the Parliament. A priest bearing the *viaticum* met the royal procession. The king descended from his carriage, and knelt in the road. This act of devotion aroused tremendous enthusiasm in the crowd of bystanders, and cries of "Vive le Roi!" were heard on all sides with more unanimity and heartfelt vigor than ever before.

The *bourgeoisie* is still Christian and royalist. But let us not deceive ourselves, it threatens to become revolutionary. Certain characteristic symptoms are beginning to appear.

* M. Charles Aubertin, *L'Esprit public du Dix-huitième Siècle.*

The clerks of the *basoche* * sometimes wear the aspect of demagogues, and a sort of democratic hiss is coming to be frequently heard from the pit of the theatres. I notice the presence among the *bourgeoisie* of a restless younger generation who will pour all the effervescence of the new movement into the old bottles of a disorganized society. The opposition will wax gradually stronger, working down from one social stratum to another, from the princes of the blood to the mass of the people, who are not yet infected.

* *Basoche* was the term applied to the jurisdiction of the clerks to the solicitors of the Parliament of Paris.

VI.

THE PEOPLE.

DO you see, in the fields, those creatures like wild beasts, of both sexes, "burned black and red by the sun, crouching on the ground which they are digging and turning up with unremitting persistence? They have something like an articulate voice, and when they rise to their feet they exhibit the faces of human beings,—and such, in fact, they are. When night comes, they disappear in their dens, where they live on black bread, water, and roots. They save other men the trouble of sowing, ploughing, and reaping for a livelihood, and thus they well deserve a bit of the bread which they have sown." *

Do you see them now, "in frightful misery, without beds or furniture, the greater part of them, for half the year even lacking the bread made of barley and oats which is their only sustenance, and which they are obliged to take from their own mouths and their children's to pay the taxes?" †

Do you see "the poor slaves, beasts of burden fastened to a yoke, who toil painfully along under the lash," ‡ the miserable wretches, the outcasts, who in famine years — and

* La Bruyère. † Massillon. ‡ Marquis d'Argenson.

they come with frightful frequency, those famine years — eat grass like sheep, and die, like flies, in swarms?

And yet, would one believe it, they do not complain. They do not so much as think of complaining. Their suffering and penury seem to them a part of the ordinary course of nature, like the winter or the frost. They do not complain. Why? Because, though they lack bread for the body, they have that bread of the soul, — hope. Yes, the hope of heaven to come, of an ideal world as far superior to the real world as a gilded pavilion is to a foul sewer, — hope of the veritable fatherland, where there will be no more weariness, or tears, or sorrow; hope their sustenance, their consolation, their vision of the future; hope, that highest of all possessions, which the *philosophes* are determined at all hazards to wrest from them! But they have something which the *philosophes* have not, — the sanctified poesy of the Church, its sad and joyous songs, the recurring cycle of its festal days, which give variety and charm to the year. They have, too, the church-tower of their native village; the cemetery where their parents lie at rest, and whither they go to pray; the crucifix, image of God the Son, whose feet and hands and side they kiss and bathe with their tears. They have that which ye have not, ye freethinking men of the world, — the only real, inestimable treasure, which still subsists in all its force, even when the knell for the dying is sounding, against which death itself is powerless: they have faith! Around each poor hut the angels of Christ are flying, — angels who, when the poor devils are tempted to

dash the bitter cup from their lips, induce them to drain it to the dregs with calm resignation.

Ye great lords and noble dames, who swear by the "Enclyclopédie," men of learning and of letters, beware! Perhaps you laugh at these poor wretches. You sneer at what you are pleased to call their ignorance, because they cling to the worship of the past, because they lay a cover for the dead on their ill-furnished board on All Saints' Day. You ridicule them because they spend their paltry savings for what? To burn wax tapers to the Virgin. Be on your guard; for if they do not burn these tapers, which you despise, it will be your houses and castles which they will burn. Do not scoff at these people of little account, these nobodies, for they outnumber you, and have only to close up their ranks to suffocate you.

Ye great *philosophes*, why do you not endeavor to turn your marvellous discoveries to account in effecting the salvation of that sacred object, the human soul, rescuing it from misery, and laying it upon God's bosom comforted and at peace? Oh, why need you be of that deplorable race of men who destroy souls? Why do you turn aside from the cabin whose inmates are dying of hunger, from the workshops where the proletariat, transformed into living parts of the machinery, can no longer breathe God's air, or warm themselves in his blessed sunlight? Beware, beware! What will become of you when the day comes that the poor will say to you great nobles, "You are but men like the rest of us!" to you prelates, "You are impostors!" Beware, I say;

for if your impious doctrines triumph, here are all these workmen and peasants, all the disinherited of fortune, who will cry out to you in a voice terrible to hear, "No more resignation, but vengeance! No more tears, but guns; and if there are no guns, pikes; and if there are no pikes, clubs! We are done with docility and forbearance and humility! 'Forward,' the cry!"

Madmen, madmen! You say to them, "Poor fools, you are awaiting immortality to obtain the reward of your suffering; but there is no immortality. Poor fools, you are hoarding your tears and sorrow like so much treasure, — those of your wives and your children, too, in the hope of laying them, after death, at the foot of God's throne; but there is no God!"

Ye admirers of Helvétius, of Baron d'Holbach and Diderot, those shining lights of philosophy, beware! The day when the incredulity of which you boast shall have made its way at last from your *salons*, your boudoirs, and your academies into the peasant's cabin, — on that day tremble ye, for the vengeance of Heaven will be at hand.

The people are continually forgotten, whereas they are of all classes the one to be most sedulously kept in mind. It is in their ranks that royalty, strong and far-seeing, will always find the most reliable support of its material authority and its moral prestige. The people shed their sweat and their blood without a murmur. It is the people who, in time of peace as in war-time, in city and country, and upon the battle-field, give utterance with infectious enthusiasm,

with all the force of their robust lungs, to the cry which expresses in a breath the unity of the fatherland, — the cry of fidelity and patriotism, "Vive le Roi!"

Reforms are absolutely necessary; but we need not look to a nobility saturated with Voltairianism, to a magistracy permeated by the spirit of rebellion, to secure the triumph of the two cardinal principles, order and liberty. Nor can we depend upon a *bourgeoisie*, which is, after all, but a feeble minority. No, it is to the people considered as a whole,— that is to say, the entire nation,— that we must appeal for the working out of real progress. Upon the common people, — not upon the privileged classes, but upon the common people, have the great reformers of the past always leaned for support. But that fact is overlooked in the apartments at Versailles. There, men are too busy with the superficial aspect of affairs to probe below the surface. Too much attention is paid to the mansions of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, the academies, *salons*, castles, and palaces of justice, and not enough thought is bestowed upon the garrets and hovels, upon the honest, devout masses, who would be such a mighty rampart for the Monarchy against the attacks of a revolution half aristocratic, and half *bourgeois*. There royalty might find the elixir of youth, and assurance for the future. The king ought to appear, not to the governing classes alone, but to all his subjects, in the guise of a protector, a friend, and a father. Louis XV. is too prone to forget that of all the social strata of the eighteenth century, the best, the most worthy and patriotic, is that in which are

found the poor and lowly, the working-men, the peasants, and the proletariat. There one must go in search of honesty, piety, and conscientious toil, — a welcome relief from the disgraceful scandals of the court and the city; beneath those rough exteriors dwell souls of rare beauty. In that class, if royalty but understood the situation of affairs, lie the true bulwark of the throne, and the welfare of the country.

VII.

THE FEMALE POLITICIANS.

AT Versailles, at Paris, throughout the kingdom in fact, women are coming to play a more and more important part. At Versailles they rule Louis XV. and his ministers; at Paris they are the acknowledged arbiters of fashion, literature, and art. Throughout the kingdom they are taking sweet revenge for the Salic law.

In 1770, Collé writes in his Memoirs: "Women have so got the upper hand among Frenchmen, and have put them beneath the yoke so completely, that they no longer think and feel except at woman's bidding." Not all the women of influence are frivolous, empty-headed coquettes, like those who figure in the plays of Marivaux. Some such there are, to be sure; but there are earnest, sober-minded women as well. There are pious women too, mothers of the Church, friends of the Jesuits, deadly enemies of the "Encyclopédie," — such women as the Princesse de Marsan, who shares with Madame de Talmont, Madame de Noailles, and the Duc de Nivernais, the leadership of the so-called devout party.

There are female *philosophes* as well, carried away by the latest craze, — the craze for irreligion, — and casting themselves fearlessly into the sea of new doctrines with all the passionate abandonment of their sex.

There are learned women, who develop a most remarkable aptitude for the most difficult sciences, and handle a compass as naturally as a fan; others, who place in their boudoirs, by the side of the little altar dedicated to Benevolence or Friendship, dictionaries of natural history, treatises on physics or chemistry; others, who have their portraits painted, not in the guise of fascinating goddesses sitting upon a cloud, but as thoughtful divinities seated in a laboratory, surrounded by mathematical and astronomical instruments.

There are female politicians, pupils of Rousseau, eulogists of the *Contrat Social*, dreaming of being the Egerias and Numas of the future, of changing their arm-chairs for the rostrum, and their *salons* for clubs, zealously preaching the merits of the Parliamentary system in vogue across the Channel, and declaiming like good citizenesses — the word was just coming into fashion — against the abuses and the turpitude of the absolute *régime*. They wish to be considered energetic. ("Energy," — another word which is becoming acclimated in the best society.) They pose as models of the patrician ladies of ancient Rome, passionately desirous of freedom. Their charming mouths open for the passage of weighty words. From the depths of their satin-hung boudoirs flow eloquent denunciations of arbitrary power. These *grandes dames* of the liberal party — a novel type in French society — confide to Gustavus III., king of Sweden, their indignation with Louis XV. Read the letters of the Swedish monarch's regular correspondents, — Mesdames d'Egmont, de la Marck, de Croy, de Boufflers, de Mesmes, and de Lux-

embourg. There you will see with what vigorous language and nervous strength of style these fine ladies express their thoughts.*

The beautiful and clever Comtesse d'Egmont, as serious-minded as her father, the Maréchal de Richelieu, is frivolous, a charming creature, whose fate it was to die so young, and whose suffering and melancholy arouse such tender interest, — how violent and bitter and overflowing with virtuous indignation are her expressions with reference to the Du Barry's old lover!

"How can we bear it," she writes to Gustavus, "that he, who has tasted the celestial happiness of being passionately adored by his subjects, and who would be so adored to this day, had he left us the least opportunity to delude ourselves, should take pleasure in shattering all our hopes, and look unmoved upon such an entire change!"

Again she writes to the king of Sweden on the 27th June, 1771: "Sire, they say that you have asked for Madame du Barry's portrait: they even go so far as to declare that you have written to her. I have denied it at all risks; but the statement has been repeated to me so positively that I beg you to authorize me to deny it as positively. No, it cannot be." And on the 23d November, 1771: "I ask you once more to answer my question as to Madame du Barry's portrait. Be kind enough, I pray you, to give me your word of honor that you have it not, and never will have it, for I am very anxious to send you mine."

* Gustave III. et la cour de France, par M. A. Goffroy.

Madame de Boufflers writes to Gustavus in this tone: "Absolute power is a mortal disease, which, by imperceptibly corrupting the moral qualities of its possessors, ends by destroying States. The acts of sovereigns have to undergo the censure of the whole world. France is doomed if the present administration continues."

The Comtesse de la Marck, in a letter to the king of Sweden, draws the following picture of society at the close of the reign of Louis XV.: "Our young women are bursting with wit; but as for the power of reasoning, one rarely hears it mentioned. They are all initiated into the secrets of the State, they have their fingers in every pie, and make love for pastime. Some repositories of wit there are, where God and religion are made a mockery, and where those who believe in God and religion are looked upon as fools; such, in brief, is our plight. Healthy emulation and moral principle are alike abandoned; even in the stage-plays, everything is out of joint. We have one or two sculptors still, and three or four painters. Jewelry is still fashionable, but it will soon be out of date, for people buy nothing but diamonds now: to be sure, they do not pay for them. In a word, we have fallen very low, and ought to be content so long as we are not attacked; for in that case I cannot imagine what would become of us."

The movement has begun. Henceforth the women will be in the forefront of the opposition to the powers that be. The current sets in that direction, and they must float with it. The leading *salons* of Paris are so many

rallying points of hostility to the king. Politics envelops everything.

"Social gatherings, ostensibly for pleasures," says Besenval, "have become little States-General, where the ladies, transformed into legislators, discuss public affairs, and lay down principles with the assurance and self-sufficiency which they derive from their longing to rule the roast, and to bring themselves into prominence,—a longing which is increased tenfold by the importance of the issue, and the noise it is making."

Do not imagine, however, that most of these eloquent stateswomen, prating at random about the respective prerogatives of the throne and the magistracy, absolute power and freedom, mean by that to renounce their customary wiles of coquetry, of what is called love. Be shy of these fine ladies, who are sober-minded only in appearance. Politics is but the pretext: love-making is the real motive.

VIII.

LOVE.

OF all forms of love, the least common in the first society during the reign of Louis XV. is conjugal love. Well-bred married people occupy the position towards one another of courteous and dignified strangers. The husband calls his wife *Madame*, and she calls him *Monsieur*. They live under the same roof, but have entirely distinct suites, and each gives the other notice of an intended visit. They never ride in the same carriage, they never meet in the same *salon*. A husband who followed his wife about would be laughed at as a jealous fellow, a country bumpkin. A woman who should have the extraordinary idea of falling in love with her husband would be overwhelmed with ridicule. Such a passion in society would not be *comme il faut*. Conjugal love is absolutely out of fashion. The Baron de Besenval is of opinion that "though this fact is perhaps destructive of good morals, society is an enormous gainer thereby." He adds, that, "relieved from the chilly embarrassment of the presence of the husbands, there is a sense of extreme freedom; the flirting of the men and women keeps up the interest, and furnishes daily subjects for salacious adventures."

Salacious adventures, indeed, are sought on every hand. There is little thought of true passion, for pleasure is what is desired. Hear what a great lady has to say, in 1764, to the Duc de Lauzun, the future Lovelace, whose education in the art of gallantry is not yet entirely concluded.

"Believe me, my dear little cousin, romance is quite out of date; it makes one ridiculous, and that is all. I took quite a fancy to you, my child; it is not my fault if you mistook it for a *grande passion*, and made up your mind that it would never end. What difference does it make to you, so long as that fancy has passed away, whether I have taken a similar fancy to another, or remain without a lover? You have many things in your favor in making yourself agreeable to the other sex: make good use of them to that end, and be sure that the loss of one can always be repaired by another. It is the only way to be happy and amiable." * Chamfort defines love as merely "The exchange of fancy, and the contact of person." Such are the morals *à la mode.* One takes it off in the same way that one puts it on. As the Prince de Ligne says: "One has been happy in the possession, and one is delighted to have ceased to possess."

Where are the good old days of heartfelt passion, of trembling avowals, of sighs and tears and despair? Where the days of heroic attachments, with their accompaniment of chivalrous respect, long and weary waiting, sublime devotion, oaths of everlasting fidelity, unimpeachable dis-

* Mémoires of the Duc de Lauzun.

cretion, touching gratitude, and lofty and generous virtues? Just look at the Cupid of the reign of Louis XV., the noisy, insolent, triumphant Cupid, who bids contemptuous defiance to the true love of former days, as a mischievous, ill-bred child makes sport of an old man. Hear him, as he says, with his cunning leer: "Your lovers are only boobies; they can do nothing but languish, and sigh 'Alas!' and tell their anguish to the neighboring echoes. I have suppressed the echo business. My subjects do not talk; may I die if there is anything as much alive as they are. Languishing timidity and pink-and-white martyrdom are not in vogue now; all those things are insipid platitudes of bygone days. I do not put my subjects to sleep, I wake them up. They are so active that they have no leisure to be tender; their looks express their desires: instead of sighing, they attack at once. They do not say, 'Grant me the favor!' but take it for themselves; and that is as it should be." *

Hear Madame d'Épinay, who speaks of modesty as "A charming quality, which one fastens on with pins."

Hear how the age boasts, with Crébillon *fils*, "of having at last got to the bottom of things," of having put down what he calls "exaggerations, affectations, and grimaces."

Listen to the materialistic language of Buffon himself, the grave and majestic Buffon: "Why does love make all other created beings happy, and man alone wretched? Is it because only the physical side of that passion is attractive, and the moral side is of no account?" †

* Marivaux, La Réunion des Amours.

† Buffon, Discours sur la nature des animaux.

Thus we see that it is a well-understood rule, proclaimed by the great minds of the age, that the moral side of love must be suppressed first of all. Love is no longer represented as a pretty little god, flying about, naked and free. The foes of ceremony and of long waiting form a sect of their own, the *Antifaçonniers.* Another similar corporation dubs itself the *Société du Moment.* To choose the moment wisely, that is the acme of the art.

" How many *liaisons* have begun by active insolence, in a carriage whose driver is a shrewd fellow for going the longest way about, pretending to be deaf, and walking his horses? Brutal love-making ends by having principles of its own, a certain sort of philosophy, and specious excuses. There are keen intellects, who decree that a bold lover has in reality more consideration for a woman than one of the bashful sort, and that he shows his respect for her to better purpose by sparing her the long agony of yielding one point after another." *

To the lover who remains too long upon his knees, the eighteenth century cries. " Get up, and take your mistress in your arms! "

Very perverse and frivolous and guilty is the society of the time of Louis XV. Very immoral are these *galantes* great ladies, the patricians of harlotry, who love scandal for scandal's sake, and take keen and haughty enjoyment in the loss of their reputation. We must, however, do them the justice to acknowledge that they preserve, amid all their

* MM. de Goncourt, L'Amour au XVIIIe siècle. 1 vol. Dentu.

demoralization, one quality which is lacking in many of the fashionable beauties of democratic times, — disinterestedness. No, no, they bear no resemblance to you, selfish, treacherous, avaricious women, who combine with the ordinary vices of the courtesan a vice more odious than all the others, — hypocrisy! — to you, abandoned creatures, who were born to give the lie to every real passion, every noble emotion; to you, who know no remorse save that you have not sold yourselves sufficiently dear, and who, if by chance or mischance you should happen to yield once or twice to a veritable passion of the flesh, if not of the heart, would blame yourself without pity for such weakness, like a shopkeeper who is in despair because he has sold something for nothing.

Ye sirens of low estate, women who amuse yourselves by laying snares for men of honor, and diverting yourselves with them as inferior wretches of no use except to arouse the self-love or prick the jealousy of your wealthy lovers, your complaisant financiers; venal creatures, and venal without excuse, because your need of money is not for the necessaries of life, but for luxuries, for a jewel, a carriage, a box at the theatre, new toilets made by the latest fashionable dressmaker, — oh, ye degrading and degraded females, happily you are rare in the good society of the eighteenth century, much more rare than in democratic circles, where the *salons* are crowded with male and female *parvenus* living beyond their means, and venality, the death of true love, assumes frightful dimensions. From the great

ladies of the eighteenth century one asks at least the qualities of an honest woman, if not her virtue. In the best society of the epoch, love is immoral, indecent, and unblushing, but love does still exist. To be sure, it is not the elevated, magnanimous, inspired passion which moves the heroines of the great Corneille or the gentle Racine. It is not the ideal passion, purified by the spirit of self-sacrifice and by the burning flame of enthusiastic adoration. No, that sort of love is no more to be found. But love of some sort does still exist, or, even if it is but a simulacrum of the real thing, it is not at all events a vile traffic.

Let us add, to be strictly just, that towards the close of the reign the level of sentiment began to rise a little. The "Nouvelle Héloïse" gave a new turn to the erotic morals of France; and if it is sometimes a bit declamatory, we can but admit that it has something of the element of spirituality.

Buffon's sentiment is no longer approved, that "in choosing to yield to a sentimental passion, man simply abuses himself, and creates in his heart a void which nothing can fill." The fashion has changed; affectation of passion takes the place of affected indifference. There is in Cythera's isle the figure of the sensitive man, the out-and-out lover. "Sensitiveness," that is the expressive word of the day.

The Comtesse de Blot declares, at a reception given by the Duchesse de Chartres: "Unless endowed with superhuman virtue, a really sensitive woman could refuse nothing

to Rousseau's passion." Formerly sarcasm and scepticism were the rule, but now enthusiasm has supplanted them. Declarations of love are philosophical disquisitions or tragical declamations. Every lover is an actor, who speaks his part with attitudes, inflections of the voice, emphasis and gestures all studied up beforehand. From one extreme we have gone to the other. Henceforth we see upon the stage of the *salons* the comedians of love, Don Juans *emeriti virtuosi* in the art of sentiment.

"Before everything else they aim at satisfying their own conceit, and congratulating themselves, prouder to end the comedy content with their own performance than with that of the lady concerned. To succeed in moving and grieving her, there are some who carry out upon their face the lie they are acting with their whole person, — who assume the airs of an old man, cover their faces with plaster, rub the powder off their hair, and make themselves pale by ceasing to drink wine. There are some even, who, to procure a definite rendezvous, will lay despair on their faces, as one lays on rouge; with diluted gum Arabic they draw upon their cheeks the traces of tears but half wiped away." *

They boast of returning to the worship of nature, of admiring the country, of being tender-hearted, and of possessing other common instincts of humanity. Whereas they used to deny the existence of love, they now parody it.

* MM. de Goncourt.

IX.

THE FAMOUS *SALONS.*

THE leading *salons* of Paris are famous throughout Europe. They are the undisputed arbiters of style, and give society its tone. The women are enthroned there as sovereigns, give direction to the conversation, and by that means to public opinion. The former standard of taste there becomes the interpreter of the new ideas.

The most striking thing in society in the last years of Louis XV. is the constant diminution of the interval which separates the nobility from the men of letters.

"The haughty Maréchale de Luxembourg always chooses La Harpe for her escort, for he has such a distinguished way of offering his arm. The man of humble birth not only obtains the *entrée* of the *salon*, but he acquires a leading position there, if he has the talent to sustain it. The very first place in conversation, and indeed in the public esteem, belongs to Voltaire, the son of a notary; to Rousseau, the son of a clockmaker; and to D'Alembert, a foundling picked up by a glazier." *

In Walpole's opinion, literature henceforth fills too great a place in social intercourse. "Literature," he writes, "is an

* M. Taine, Origines de la France contemporaine.

excellent pastime, when one has nothing better to do; but it becomes mere pedantry in society, and is a terrible bore when one makes a show of it in public. The authors whom one runs across everywhere are worse than their works,—which is not complimentary to either. In general, the prevailing tone of conversation is solemn and pedantic, and there is scarcely any amusement to be got out of it except in quarrelling."

This judgment is a little harsh. After all, Paris still holds the sceptre, from a worldly standpoint, and foreign princes on their travels consider it an honor to be admitted to these *salons*, whose brilliancy and prestige are everywhere acknowledged.

The Maréchale de Luxembourg, whose first husband was the Duc de Boufflers, heroine of the famous *chanson*,—

> " Quand Boufflers parut à la cour,
> On crut voir la mère d'Amour ;
> Chacun s'empressait à lui plaire,
> Et chacun l'avait à son tour," * —

the Maréchale de Luxembourg, adapting herself to the time, has amended her ways. "By means of a great name, unlimited assurance, and, above all, a hospitable mansion, she has succeeded in making people forget her former lapses, and in setting herself up as the sovereign arbiter of propriety and good form, and of those elements which enter into the composition of refinement. Her empire over the young people

* " When Boufflers appeared at court, she was hailed as the mother of Love. Every one was extremely anxious to make himself agreeable to her, and each possessed her in turn."

of both sexes is absolute: she restrains the giddiness of the young women, forces them to be entirely impersonal in their flirtations, and compels the young men to be moderate and considerate: in short, she maintains the sacred flame of French urbanity, and in her *salon* is preserved intact the tradition of noble and unaffected manners, which Europe has always admired, and tried in vain to imitate. Never was Roman censor of more service to the morals of the republic than the Maréchale de Luxembourg has been to the attractiveness of society."*

By her cleverness and her air of authority, by compelling a hearing, and, more than all else, by making herself feared, the Maréchale has succeeded in acquiring consideration, and, more than that, respect. She rules the aristocratic, and the literary world also, with a firm and despotic hand. Presentation at court is not enough now, one must also receive the approbation of Madame la Maréchale de Luxembourg. Even Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the irascible and morose Jean-Jacques, seems fascinated by this venerable dame. "I had hardly laid eyes upon her," he writes, "before I was under her spell. I found her charming, with the charm which time cannot dispel, and which has the most power over my heart. I expected to find her with a biting tongue, and overflowing with epigrams. But I found something much better than that. Madame de Luxembourg's conversation does not scintillate with wit; there are no witty sallies, and nothing of what is properly called *finesse;* but there is a pervading

* Duc de Lévis, Souvenirs et portraits.

exquisite refinement and delicacy, which is never striking, but is always delightful. Her flattery is so much the more intoxicating because it is couched in such simple language. One would say that it passed her lips without being in her thoughts, and that her heart was overflowing, simply because it was too full."

Another woman of superior parts, whose *salon* at Paris, at Versailles, and at Chanteloup is an aristocratic and intellectual centre of the first order, is the clever and virtuous Duchesse de Choiseul, wife of the famous minister. "In an age when every coterie has its own *philosophe*, who acts as its leading spirit, Madame de Choiseul thinks for herself. Neither the sarcasms of Voltaire nor the diatribes of Rousseau disturb her sense of right or her keen discernment. She forms sound judgments of men and things, without allowing herself to be biassed by fashion or prejudice. In her *salon* one always recognizes an instinctive taste for the noble and the beautiful. Hers is a noble nature, which wins one's love at first sight, and in whose company one would discover every day some reason for loving her more." *

The Duchesse de Choiseul will never be the dupe of Rousseau. "He has inculcated a good moral," she writes, speaking of the author of "La Nouvelle Héloïse," "but a moral which we knew before, because there can be no other. But he has drawn from it dangerous and untrustworthy conclusions, or has put it in our power to draw them by the way in

* Prosper Merimée, article in the "Moniteur universel" for 29th April, 1867.

which he has set them forth. We ought always to be suspicious of metaphysics when applied to simple things. Fortunately for us, nothing is more simple than moral maxims; and the truest of all such is the one which comes most nearly home to our hearts: *Do not do to another what you would not wish to have done to you.* Everybody knows that, and understands it. There is no need of fine disquisitions upon good and bad morals, the origin of passion, prejudice, etc., and the hosts of other twaddle with which these gentlemen fill our newspapers and our book-stalls and libraries, to teach us what virtue is."

The Duchesse de Choiseul is equally distrustful of Rousseau when viewed as a moralist or as a political publicist. "I agree," she says, "that our prejudices must lead us into error as inevitably as abuses creep into the execution of the law; but to desire to destroy everything, to correct the errors, is as if one should cut off a man's head to get rid of a few white hairs. To employ one's intellect at the expense of public order is one of the worst of crimes. It is the sort of offence which is described by the parable of the tares in the Gospel. A worthy citizen will serve his country with mind and brain to the utmost of his ability; but he will not expend his talents in writing essays upon the social compact, to arouse suspicion of the legitimacy of governments, and to load us down with the weight of chains which we have never felt." Madame de Choiseul brings this edifying letter of 17th July, 1776, to an end with these words: "I am always distrustful of this Rousseau, with his strange systems, his extraordinary

costume, and his way of shouting his pulpit eloquence from the house-tops. He has always seemed to me to be an impostor posing as a virtuous man."

The Duchesse de Choiseul is of a type which arouses our respect as well as our sympathy. If one shudders to see a Madame de Boufflers, the idol of the Temple, doing the honors of the Prince de Conti's household in company with Mademoiselle Auguste, the dancer from the Opéra, or to see a Maréchale de Mirepoix sitting upon the front seat of Madame de Pompadour's carriage, and Madame du Barry's after her, one is happy to meet a woman worthy of her exalted rank and her fortune, a woman who, at all times and in all places, sets an example of all that is honorable and beautiful and true. There is in her whole life such perfect purity, such virtuous and unpretentious charm in her attractive personality, and such a great mind in her small body. *

"The Duchesse de Choiseul is not very pretty," writes Horace Walpole, "but she has beautiful eyes. She is a little model in wax, and for a long time was not allowed to speak, as she was deemed incapable of it, so bashful and modest is she. The court has hardly cured her modesty. Her bashfulness is compensated by the most fascinating voice, which makes one almost forget the extreme purity of her language, and the exquisite propriety of her expression. Oh! she is the most refined, the most lovable and sweetest little creature that ever came out of an enchanted egg."

* See M. Grasset's study of Madame de Choiseul et son temps. 1 vol. Dentu.

The *salons* of the Maréchale de Luxembourg and the Duchesse de Choiseul are notably aristocratic centres. From a literary standpoint, the three principal *salons* of Paris are those of Madame Geoffrin, the Marquise du Deffand, and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. The first is in Rue St. Honoré, the second in Rue St. Dominique, in one of the buildings of the Convent of St. Joseph,* and the third in Rue de Bellechasse.

Madame Geoffrin's power is a characteristic sign of the times. Is this influential person a scion of a noble stock? No. Her birth was of the obscurest. Who is her husband? One of the founders of the manufacture of mirrors, a very rich *bourgeois*, but extremely unprepossessing, and an absolute nullity as far as intellect is concerned. It is said that one day, one of the lady's friends, resuming her place in her *salon*, after quite a long absence, said, in a reminiscent vein: "Pray, what has become of the old gentleman who always sat at the foot of the table, and never spoke to anybody?" "Ah!" replied Madame Geoffrin, "I know whom you mean. He is dead." "Really! Who was he, pray?" "My husband."

Is Madame Geoffrin literary? Not the least in the world. In fact, she is the personification of ignorance. She does not even know how to spell. Speaking of education, she says, "I have got along so well without it that I have never felt the need of it."

Think of it! At the close of the reign of Louis XV.

* Now the Ministry of War.

this woman of the people, without youth * or beauty, without talent or education, this old woman, who at any other time would have died in obscurity, is one of the principal powers in France, one of those who guide public opinion! Her *salon*, celebrated throughout Europe, may be considered one of the institutions of the eighteenth century. The greatest nobles pay their court to her. Crowned heads actually do homage to her. When, in the month of June, 1766, she goes to pay a visit to her friend — I had almost said her *protégé* — Stanislas Poniatowski, king of Poland, her journey is looked upon by all the courts as an event of political significance. At Warsaw she is received by the king as a dear mother, with all imaginable respect and delight and tenderness. At Vienna, the Empress Maria Theresa overwhelms her with attentions. A princess of the blood could not meet with a more flattering reception. The Czarina Catherine II. takes pleasure in writing affectionate letters to her, and attaches an extraordinary value to the correspondence.

Why the prodigious success of this woman, — the exceptional honor bestowed by France and by foreign nations upon one who ought in reality to marvel at the part she is playing? Why? Because Madame Geoffrin has been clever enough to create for herself a literary *salon;* because she invites artists and authors to dinner and supper; because she is one of those who loaned the money to found the "Encyclopédie;" because she has done more, perhaps, than any other one person to establish real sympathy between the aris-

* She was born in 1699.

tocracy of birth and the aristocracy of talent. A vogue such as hers is always susceptible of some explanation. Madame Geoffrin understands — no one better — the art of handling the exacting, vain, irritable race of artists and *littérateurs*. Though she lacks wit, she has an abundant supply of tact and *finesse*, and of a certain sort of cleverness, combined with unfailing good-humor.*

"Madame Geoffrin's manner," says the Baron de Gleichen, "may be compared to La Fontaine's style. There is much art, but it is hidden. Everything about her seems very ordinary, and yet no one who tries to imitate her will ever equal her. Everything at her house is sensible, easy-going, convenient, useful, and unpretentious. Her *bourgeois* tone and her homely language give a piquant turn to her shrewd and sensible conversation."

Horace Walpole also admires this past mistress in the art of maintaining a *salon*. He writes to Lady Hervey on the 13th October, 1765: "Madame Geoffrin is a perfect prodigy of good sense, useful information, good and timely advice. She has a way of taking one which is fascinating to me. I have never in my life seen anybody who was so quick to pounce upon one's defects, little vanities, and deceits, nor who could explain them to one so clearly, and convince one so easily. I never cared, as you know, about being told of my faults; but you cannot imagine the pleasure which I have in her society. I take her for confessor and guide at once,

* See the introduction by M. Charles de Mouy printed with the Correspondence of King Stanislas and Madam Geoffrin. Plon. 1 vol.

and I really begin to think that I shall end by becoming a reasonable creature, which I have never yet claimed to be. The next time I see her, I mean to say to her, 'O Common-sense, take a seat, pray!' If she chose to take the trouble, I assure you, Madame, that she could lord it over me as if I were a mere child."

The principal rival of Madame Geoffrin's *salon* is that of the Marquise du Deffand. She is no less representative of the *grandes dames* of the day than Madame Geoffrin of the *bourgeoisie*, and she is as well informed as Madame Geoffrin is ignorant. One of the two does not even know how to spell, while the other writes as well as the most famous authors.

Both are well advanced in years, while their respective *salons* wield a preponderating influence in Paris. They are, in fact, very nearly of the same age. Madame Geoffrin was born in 1699, and Madame du Deffand in 1697, — a year after that Madame de Sévigné in whose wake she was to tread, and whose fame she was to parallel.

The Marquise du Deffand is not only old, she is blind as well. Her eyes, once so beautiful, which are said to have wrought such havoc, are dimmed and lustreless. But her lack of bodily eyes was more than supplied by the eyes of her mind, with which she sees everything. Seated night and day in the famous arm-chair which she calls her *tonneau*, this bright and clever blind woman is a power to be reckoned with. Her *salon* is an Areopagus whose decrees are not to be laughed aside. To be numbered among those who are

admitted there is a very great distinction, a favor to be envied. To cross her threshold one must be a personage of note, whether in the book of heraldry or in the golden volume of literature.* A procession of notables and celebrated people is passing in and out at all hours. It is a centre of intelligence which can furnish the key to every enigma, knows the ramifications of every intrigue, and is the nursery of all the new ideas. It is a *salon* devoted to literary and political diplomacy at once; it might almost be called the official *rendez-vous* of the foreign diplomatists, who assemble there in quest of the material for their daily despatches to their respective governments. It is the place where all the burning questions of the day, of French or European interest, are dealt with in an extraordinary way by men of charming qualities, who converse, but do not argue, and who, while striving first of all to be agreeable, can in a moment pass, as Boileau has it, "from grave to gay, from joke to sober earnest."

The sharp-tongued dowager presided at all the symposia with a sort of sovereign majesty. The prestige of her celebrity, the nervous eloquence of her speech, the purity of her style and language, her rank, her high connections, her marvellous wit, so quick, so keen, and so biting, make of her a woman to whose dominion the most unruly must perforce submit. She has the art of making herself feared. Woe to the poor wretch whose peculiarities she takes it into

* See the monograph of M. de Lescure prefixed to the Correspondence of the Marquise du Deffand. 2 vols. Plon.

her head to ridicule. She has, indeed, been well called the female Voltaire, the high-priestess of sarcasm. In her slim, nervous hands, the sceptre of intellect resembles a rod of chastisement. She is often amiable, but a very little thing is enough to irritate and embitter her; and then her dreaded arm-chair becomes a tribune from which she pours forth the vials of her wrath, and lets fly all the shafts of satire.

Hers is the leading Parisian *salon.* Her letters are models of style, marvels of clear and precise statement and of fine wit. No classical writer had ever a more irreproachable mode of expression. As Madame de Sévigné personified the seventeenth century, so is Madame du Deffand the very incarnation of the eighteenth. Even Voltaire, in whose eyes she is the final awarder of fame, is so much in fear of her that he tries to insinuate himself into her good graces by pretending to be as blind as she. There is one man, however, who dares to defy the avenging thunderbolts of the Marquise du Deffand, and who for many reasons might well fear her; for he is a *savant*, academician, man of the world, and *philosophe*, — D'Alembert. But it is all explained by this: D'Alembert is in love with the marquise's deadly foe, Mademoiselle de Lespinasse.

The two rivals were fast friends in the beginning. During the ten years from 1754 to 1764, they lived beneath the same roof. Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, who was an illegitimate daughter, born in 1732, of the Comtesse d'Albon, had had a hard road to travel. Poor, and without resource, she was only too glad at first to find shelter with Madame du

Deffand. Without being at all pretty, she was bright, agreeable, and well informed, talked and wrote well, and concealed beneath a calm and reserved exterior a restless mind and feverish imagination. So she came at last to suffer torments in the secondary *rôle* she was playing, — a sort of literary servitude.

The humble companion made a *coup d'état.* She artfully assembled in her own little apartment a select circle, limited to a chosen few, who came there in secret for a few moments before the hour at which the *salon* of the marquise was open to her friends. But some jealous tongue betrayed the secret, and her old blind mistress was informed of the scheme. Enraged by such a revolutionary proceeding, she pitilessly drove Mademoiselle de Lespinasse out of her house.

The rupture between these two split Parisian society into two camps, one of which approved the action of the marquise, the other sympathizing with the younger woman. Mademoiselle de Lespinasse was by no means left without adherents. Her faithful friends, D'Alembert, Turgot, the Chevalier de Chastellux, the Abbé de Boismont, and the Archbishop of Aix, subscribed to assure her a modest, but independent, competence, and hired an apartment for her in Rue de Bellechasse. Her *salon* is not a very extensive one, but it is inspired by abundance of intellect and earnestness, and by most perfect sympathy among its frequenters, who are limited to a chosen few, and who find there more pleasure than in the great intellectual symposia of a Marquise du Deffand or a Madame Geoffrin.

They are very fascinating and very pleasant on the surface, these famous *salons*, which arouse the admiration of all Europe. But what a mass of inconsistencies and pitiful trifling do we find in this society of aristocrats by birth, wealth, or wit! What dreary hours of discouragement, *ennui*, and disappointment do all these people know who amuse themselves thus, or, to speak more accurately, pretend to be amusing themselves! Even Madame Geoffrin, for all her robust health, her common-sense, and equable disposition, has moments of anxiety and terror as she contemplates the work that is being done by these *encyclopédistes*, to whom her services are without end. She opens her doors to them, shelters them with her influence, and furnishes them abundantly with funds, artisans of confusion that they are, wreckers of throne and altar together! While, by one of those strange inconsistencies so often met with in the eighteenth century, she is at heart a devoted royalist and devout churchwoman. The friend, *confidante*, and adviser of the greatest scoffers among the *philosophes* and of the most dangerous materialists, the woman who by her bounty has made the publication of the "Encyclopédie" possible, confesses to a Capuchin, is most punctual in attendance at mass and other religious ceremonies at the church of St. Roch, and is very careful to have a priest at hand when any of her friends is *in extremis*. Sometimes it seems as if this aged woman, than whom no one is more addicted to repose and conservatism, had an instinctive foreboding that this house of hers, which seems so tranquil and peaceful, is

really the cursed laboratory wherein the poisons which are to spread death and destruction among individuals and societies are being compounded in silence, by the light of the *salon* lamp, in the presence of a few choice spirits of destruction.

Even Madame du Deffand has occasional fleeting yearnings for the solace which religion brings. At certain hours she has vague aspirations for a devout frame of mind, "which seems to her," as she says, "the happiest possible state." Bitterly does she sigh for that peace of heart and soul which is the gift of faith, and is the source of so much strength and comfort in this vale of tears. Despite her great powers of mind, she bends under the weight of an *ennui* that will not be driven away, and her letters are sometimes despairing in tone. In the midst of her worldly pursuits, sublime in their utter emptiness, she gives voice here and there, with sinister eloquence, to thoughts which make one shudder. At such times her reflections, pregnant with deep thought and mental anguish, are as thrilling as Hamlet's soliloquy. Her arm-chair, which she calls her *tonneau*, she might call her tomb. She sits in it like one dead, who still has the sensation of living. To the man who has said, "Glissez, mortels, n'appuyez pas," to Voltaire, the superficial, this poor old creature, blind morally as well as physically, hesitating between longing for death and the dread of it, propounded with touching anxiety certain questions upon the terrible problems of the destiny of mankind.

On the 1st of April, 1769, she wrote to him as follows:

"Tell me why it is that though I detest living, I fear death. There is nothing to make me think that it will not be the end of everything with me; on the other hand, I can see that my mind is going to pieces, as well as my body. Whatever is said to me on the one side or the other makes no impression on me. I listen to no voice but my own, and I can find nothing but doubt and darkness. 'Have faith,' some one says; 'that is the surest way.' But how can one be expected to have faith in what one does not understand? Things which I do not understand may exist, without doubt, and for that reason I do not deny their existence; I am like one born deaf and blind. Such a one will agree that sounds and colors exist; but does he know what he is agreeing to? If it were enough simply not to deny, well and good; but it is not enough. How can one make up his mind between the finite and the infinite; between emptiness and fulness? No one of my faculties can teach me; and what can I learn without them? And yet, if I do not believe what I must believe, I am threatened with being thousands and thousands of times more wretched after I am dead than I have been in life. How shall I decide; or is it possible for me to come to a decision? I ask you the question, you, whose character is so true that you ought through very sympathy to discern the truth, if it be discernible. You must teach me something about the other world, and tell me if we are fated to play a part there."

To cap the climax of her woes, Madame du Deffand is

the victim of anguish of the heart no less than mental anguish. She, who had never known the meaning of real love, plunged into a sort of ecstatic passion when she was wellnigh seventy years old. She has conceived for a man twenty years her junior, and who is more afraid of ridicule than anything in the world, the clever and satirical Englishman, Horace Walpole, a strange affection, hesitating in a certain sense, and yet headstrong and jealous, which is more than friendship, but cannot be love. By a curious whim of fate, she falls in love, for the first time, at an age when it is no longer allowable to love even for the last time.

Mademoiselle de Lespinasse is in some respects even more unfortunate than Madame du Deffand. This young woman, frivolous to all seeming, loves like Sappho, or the Portuguese nun, or like *La Nouvelle Héloïse.* Hers is a type of high-flown, ardent, frantic passion. She loves madly, to the point of insanity, a brilliant officer who does not care a fig for her, — M. de Guibert. She lives on her love, and dies of it. Her poor body and her poor soul are as if they were wrapped in the mantle of Nessus. One would say she was the victim of the fatalism in which the ancients believed. In the despair of her death agony she writes to her unfeeling lover: "Ah, how cruel men are! Beside them tigers are angels of gentleness. I ought naturally to have devoted my energies to hatred of mankind; but I have but ill fulfilled my destiny. I have loved much, and hated but little. I have not the strength to love any more; my soul wearies and torments me, and it is of no use for me to live any

longer. I have fever every day, and my doctor, who is not the most skilful of men, keeps dinning into my ears that I am wasting away with grief, and that my pulse and respiration alike denote acute mental suffering; and he always says as he takes his leave, 'We have no cure for the soul.'"

O worthy *philosophes*, think you that you know such a cure? Authors of the "Encyclopédie," *habitués* of the famous *salons*, if you care to know the difference between your philosophy and true faith, contrast the dying hours of one of your proselytes with those of a God-fearing Christian woman!

X.

THE *PHILOSOPHES.*

WHERE are the days when La Bruyère wrote: "A man who is born a Christian and a Frenchman finds himself restricted in the indulgence of his satirical vein, for great subjects are forbidden him."

Where are the days when the advocate Barbier wrote these words in his journal: "I believe that a man should do what he has to do honorably and straightforwardly, without meddling with affairs of state, for which he has no capacity, and which do not concern him."

Prudence, modesty, respect for authority, dread of shaking the foundations of the social structure, — the *philosophes* have done away with all that. The *salons* have become academies where politics and religion are discussed unendingly, by way of attacking the Church and the monarchy. In 1762 Bachaumont speaks of a deluge of pamphlets and political dissertations, "as disclosing a perfect rage for arguing about matters relating to finance and government."

In 1765 Horace Walpole declares that "the atheists, who monopolize conversation, are declaiming as loudly against kings as against priests. They do nothing but preach, and their avowed doctrine is atheism. Voltaire him-

self does not satisfy them. One of their fellowship said of him, 'Oh, he's a mere bigot; why, he's a deist!'"

The *philosophes* are the heroes of the hour. Their doctrines have not yet permeated the mass of the people, but among the aristocrats, the wealthy *bourgeoisie*, the men of letters, the higher magistrates, and the financial magnates, they speak with the assured and lofty tone of masters. They are to be found in all the academies, in the mansion of every great noble, at all the *fêtes* and all the elegant supper-parties. It is alleged that even some of the higher orders of the clergy are on friendly terms with them. Now that the day of the dandies has gone by, the *philosophes* are the fashion. A *philosophe* with his subversive ideas seems to be as necessary an appendage of a well-ordered *salon* as the candelabrum and its candles. Philosophy, before it became the most dangerous and threatening of facts, was a mere pastime, a fashionable form of entertainment in refined circles. The flame which is to consume the structure appears at first in the guise of a holiday illumination, an entertaining display of Bengal lights. The great nobles are playing with loaded guns, without a suspicion that they will explode. It is as if workmen while engaged in demolishing an edifice should have a delusion, and innocently fancy that they were building one.

Extraordinary types of revolutionists these, with their lace ruffles, their fashionable oaths, their gold and crystal cups filled with an intoxicating but poisoned beverage, these effeminate *philosophes*, who, with a fascinating smile, languish-

ing glance, and soft and mellow accent, utter most impious sentiments, as one might recite an idyl or a madrigal.

What strange functions are these supper-parties, where "the company consists of smiling women in full dress, and intelligent and attractive men, between whom there is perfect harmony and complete sympathy. With the second course their imaginations begin to work, bright sallies are heard on all sides, and keen wits begin to blaze and sparkle. When dessert arrives, can they resist the temptation to make witty remarks upon subjects the most grave? With the coffee, comes the great question of the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God." *

Scepticism is looked upon as a mark of good fellowship; they take pleasure in it, and glorify themselves upon it. The old-time aristocratic dulness has given place to a habit of joking, and making satirical allusions to sacred things. The Revolution still wears cuffs. Before assuming the carmagnole, it is clothed in silk, and velvet coats. It will end with red caps, but it begins with red heels.

There are many curious inconsistencies to be noted in all this. Let us listen to Walpole for a moment: —

"From what I have said of their religious, I might better say irreligious, opinions, you must not conclude that the people of quality are atheists, — the men, at least. Happily for them, poor devils, they are incapable of going to such lengths of freethinking. They give their assent to many things, because they are *à la mode*, and because they don't

* M. Taine, Origines de la France contemporaine.

know how to contradict them. They would be ashamed to stand up for the Roman Catholic Church, because it is fashionable to gird at it; but I am very sure that they really believe in it in their hearts." *

The *philosophes* themselves recoil from the contemplation of the results and the application of their doctrines. Diderot, in his "Projet d'Instruction publique pour la Russie," admits that "atheism is intended only for a few chosen thinkers, and is by no means adapted for the great body of society." Indeed, this alleged destroyer of religion and tyranny, who in a burst of mad passion wrote this frantic couplet, —

> "Et ma main ourdirait les entrailles du prêtre
> A défaut de cordon pour étrangler les rois,"

professes guileless admiration for the Empress Catherine II., goes to Russia to pay his respects to her, and accepts a mass of compliments and gifts from this sovereign of the North.

Voltaire cries, in a moment of frankness, "The infamous thing,"— such was the Patriarch of Ferney's name for the Catholic religion, — "the infamous thing is fit only for the riffraff, great and small."

I read in Bachaumont, under date of April 23d, 1769, "From various letters which M. de Voltaire has written to people here, it is known that the great poet has repeated this year the edifying spectacle of last year, and has attended communion at Easter with a great show of piety, but some-

* January 26, 1766. Letters from Horace Walpole to his Friends during his Visits to France. Translated [into French], and preceded by an Introduction by the Comte de Baillon. Didier.

what less publicly; he pleaded indisposition as a pretext for remaining in bed, and received the sacrament there.

"They say that M. de Voltaire, annoyed by the complaints of the Bishop of Belley, who has been lamenting his unbelief, and his obstinate persistence in disseminating libellous attacks upon religion, determined to go through with this devotional function, and applied to certain notaries very recently to receive his profession of faith, which he has forwarded to Monseigneur. Whatever may be the truth as to this matter, which is told in various ways, it is easy to see, from several letters of his to different friends, how sincerely attached he is to religion, with what deep respect he regards it, and how eagerly and humbly he fulfils the duties of a true Catholic."

I wonder if Bachaumont is in sober earnest when he expresses himself thus? I would not answer for it. But there is one thing of which there is no doubt; and that is, that Voltaire has built at his own expense, close beside his *château*, a Catholic church, and that over the porch he has had engraved this inscription, which savors more of pride than piety: *Deo erexit Voltaire.*

Horace Walpole's good sense is revolted by such a sea of contradictions. "Atheism," he cries, "is a wretched dish, even though all the cooks in France exert their powers to compose new sauces for it. As for the soul, it may be that they do not have such things upon the Continent; but I am inclined to think that we do have them in England. Shakspeare, for example, had several of them, in my opinion.

I love the Jews, although they eat no pork, because they are better Christians than Voltaire." *

The phlegmatic, methodical, courteous, liberal-minded Walpole, accustomed to the manners and morals of his own country, — Walpole, the friend of the Marquise du Deffand, the keen-witted *habitué* of *salons*, the man of fashion, — cannot accustom himself to the *philosophes* of France. In his eyes they are ill-bred, conceited, and tiresome. He accuses them of "having put on the mask of sobriety, believing that it was philosophical and English, and have acquired no new quality to take the place of their natural light-heartedness and animation. They have adopted contemptuous and constrained manners, instead of continuing to display their former frank impertinence, whose very absurdity made it easy to forgive." †

What has become of the old-time French gayety? It is nought now but a reminiscence of our younger days. "Laughing has gone out of fashion as completely as jumping-jacks, and the old game of cup-and-ball," says Walpole. "Poor souls! They have n't the time to laugh. The first thing to be thought about is how to make an end of God and the king. Every one of them, men and women, is busily engaged in the work of destruction. I am looked upon as one outside the pale because I still retain some slight belief in something; but that is not my only crime, for I have told them, and thereby ruined myself forever,

* Letter of March 17, 1771.

† Letter of 25 January, 1766.

that they have borrowed from us the two most tedious things we have, — whist and Richardson." *

"I would have been glad to send the *philosophes* to Heaven, although they scarcely care about going there, they are so impertinent and ill-bred. I used sometimes to go to Baron d' Holbach's; but I have given up his dinner-parties, for I was tired to death of his authors, his *philosophes*, and his scholars, of whom he always has his dovecote full. He had wellnigh turned my head with a new theory of antediluvian floods, which they have invented to prove the immortality of matter." †

All this philosophical and scientific confusion wearied the clever Briton, and made him dizzy. Perpetual blasphemy made him doubly fond of religion. "Don't be surprised," he cries, "if you hear that I have suddenly become a Jesuit."

The gilded *salons* resplendent with light and animation, the perfumed boudoirs filled with flowers, where marquises and duchesses, bepowdered, and covered with glistening gems, and great nobles in coats of many hued velvet, vied with one another in unreasoning invective against the Christ, made him long to leave it all, and repair to some lonely cloister far away from the *philosophes*, there in peace to meditate.

"When I am tired out with their madness," he says again, "I seek an asylum at the Chartreuse, ‡ where I am tempted to prefer Lesueur to all the painters of my acquaintance."

* Letter of October 19, 1765. † Letter of December 5, 1765.

‡ The Carthusian convent, Rue d'Enfer. Lesueur's Galerie de Bruno, now in the Musée du Louvre, was then at the convent.

He never revisited the Carthusian convent without deep emotion. In 1739 he had said: "One finds there all the surroundings which conduce to sadness, reflection, and despair; and yet one is glad to be there." But in 1771, his feeling is not so keen; on the 9th of July he writes: "I do not take half the pleasure I used in visiting the churches and convents. The consciousness that the dream is at an end, and the absence of the earnestness so essential in everything which concerns religion, impart to these places the aspect of theatres doomed to destruction. The monks run here and there as if they had not long to stay there; and things which for half a day seemed sacred to me, are now unpleasant and gloomy."

Who can say that the fashionable impiety has not already made its way into these abodes of piety, where used to be found such chaste emotion and such sweet comfort? The saints carved on the Gothic structure no longer seem so venerable as of old. The variegated rays of the stained glass windows no longer have their pristine mystic clearness. The tones of the organ are less triumphant, less stirring. Walpole grows melancholy over the spirit of the time, the cursed breath which corrupts and dries up the soul. The same feeling of vague unrest, of apprehension and discouragement, exists in many minds and in many hearts. Amid this society, rotten to the core, notwithstanding its brilliancy, and the paint and patches which disfigure the cheeks of the fashionable beauties to hide their pallor, how many are trying to divert their thoughts by frivolity, like

those timid persons who whistle to keep up their courage! In the solitude of their own thoughts, when they are divorced for a moment from the tumult of their world, and thrown back upon their own resources, what do all these successful characters, male or female, find to say to themselves? What are their thoughts when the lights of the feast are extinguished, the flowers withered, and the soft, clear light of day appears, after a night of blatant impiety and fictitious enjoyment?

PART SECOND.

THE WOMEN OF THE COURT AT VERSAILLES AT THE CLOSE OF THE REIGN OF LOUIS XV.
1768–1774.

I.

LOUIS XV. IN 1768.

MARIE LECZINSKA was no more, and Versailles, bowed with grief, presented a melancholy and depressing appearance. Mademoiselle Genet, the future Madame Campan, who had been for some days installed as reader to *Mesdames de France*,* was deeply impressed by the gloomy aspect of the *château*. "These vast rooms draped in black," she wrote; "the state chairs, placed several steps higher than the floor, with a canopy trimmed with plumes stretched above them; the caparisoned horses, the great funeral procession, all in deep mourning; the huge shoulder-knots, trimmed with gold and silver spangles, which embellished the livery of the pages, and of the footmen as well, — all this paraphernalia of mourning produced such an

* Daughters of the king.

effect upon my feelings that I could scarcely stand when I was taken to the apartments of the princesses. The first day that I read to them in Madame Victoire's cabinet, I found it impossible to read more than two sentences, for my heart was beating wildly, my voice trembled, and I could scarcely see."

In two years and a half Louis XV. had lost his son, his daughter-in-law, and his wife. The deaths of these three, met in each instance with saintly and touching resignation, were well calculated to arouse for a moment in his heart a feeling of repentance and of the need of religious consolation. During the long and painful illness of Marie Leczinska, he had devoted himself to her with such affectionate assiduity that the poor queen, little accustomed to so much consideration, could not begin to show how grateful she was. After she had ceased to breathe, her husband, with sincere and deep emotion, imprinted a last kiss upon her icy brow.

People thought that such oft-repeated warnings would not be without effect upon him. Louis XV. was fifty-eight years old. His surgeon advised him to follow a life of virtue, as healthful for the body as for the soul; he urged him not simply to put on a drag, but to unharness the horses.

Vice, though pardonable to a certain extent in a young man, is shameful, absurd, and revolting in one whose hair is gray. Everything conspired to induce the king to mend his ways, — his physical condition, his honor, his interest, his

conscience, the voice of public opinion, the call of morality and religion, the dignity of the throne, and the welfare of his soul.

For four years,—that is to say, since the death of Madame de Pompadour,—he had had no titular mistress. The Parc-aux-Cerfs was not closed, but the obscure orgies of that mysterious establishment did not cause such deplorable scandal among courtiers or the people at large as a royal favorite enthroned in the palace of Versailles. Louis XV. was much attached to his four remaining daughters, Mesdames Adélaïde, Victoire, Sophie, and Louise; and it was hoped that their influence would tend to lead their father back into the ways of righteousness. The Most Christian King had religious faith, and there was room to believe that, with passions moderated by approaching old age, he would at last atone for the bad example he had set, by a life of piety and respectability. It may be that he himself longed to make his peace with God; but the force of habit, the selfish promptings of those who trade upon vice, and a sort of mad impulse were destined to gain another victory over his sense of right and his remorse.

The dominating sentiment in the heart of Louis XV. was not religious enthusiasm, but a mixture of apathy and heedlessness. Men who have reigned for many years, whether they end their days upon the throne, or abdicate, or die in exile, are almost invariably, towards the close of their career, the victims of a sort of weariness and disgust with things in general. They have witnessed so many

intrigues, so many base acts, so many recantations; they have been the object of so much insipid flattery and sickening adulation; they are so well versed in the sinuosities of the human soul,—that they finally come to hold mankind in supreme contempt. This feeling does not arouse them to anger; it is rather tranquil, indolent, and disdainful. The sovereign who has had long experience no longer indulges in any illusions on his own account, or as to other people. To every suggestion, he is tempted to reply, "What is the use?"

Ministers, courtiers, mistresses, and more humble subjects alike arouse his suspicious distrust. There are moments when he longs to let the machine run itself, so sad are his memories of the past, and so bitter his discouragement for the present. As an old pilot watches from the shore the struggling of a storm-driven bark, which he is powerless to aid, so the monarch sees from his palace the ship of state foundering in the distance, and mutters sadly to himself that he has not even the power to rescue the crew.

His mind agitated by presentiments of evil, Louis XV. no longer believed in the prestige of his throne, still less in the future of his race. He resorted to paltry expedients, pitiful tricks, and plots against himself, with the hope of re-establishing his tottering power. As Madame Campan well observes, "To distinguish Louis de Bourbon from the king of France was the most interesting object of the royal existence."

"They would have it so; they thought it was for the best," was his invariable formula when the plans of his ministers failed of success. He reigned in two persons, so to speak, having two domestic and two foreign policies, a private treasure-chest, and a secret, underground government, working in opposition to the official one.

As M. de Bontaric says: "As a man, he passed part of his life in impeding and thwarting the king. What an extraordinary spectacle! An absolute monarch reduced to the most obscure intrigues as a means of accomplishing his will, which he did not dare to declare aloud; waging a bitter but under-hand war against his ministers, and, after all, deceived in his expectations, his self-esteem wounded, conspirator *emeritus*, persisting to his dying hour in schemes which were known to all the world, and saved by nothing but his exalted rank from sharing the captivity or exile of his agents — I had almost said his accomplices!"

This explains the presence in his secret diplomatic corps of such persons as the Chevalier d'Eon, who was man and woman by turns, and the celebrated Comte de Saint-Germain, who claimed to be several centuries old, and was supposed to possess a most potent elixir of life. Baron de Gleichen says, in his "Souvenirs" that "this claim was responsible for the invention of the absurd fable of the old lady's maid whose mistress had a phial of the divine fluid hidden away: the old *soubrette* found it, and drank so much of it that she overdid the business of rejuvenating, and became a little baby."

This backstairs diplomatic body included some adventurers, but it also contained some remarkable men. The Comte de Broglie was the leader. This mysterious ministry of Foreign Affairs was in operation contemporaneously with the official ministry.

"Before long it had trustworthy agents at all the courts: sometimes it was the resident minister, who thus performed a twofold duty, without the knowledge of the titular Minister of Foreign Affairs; more frequently it was some subordinate official of the legation, who thus became a spy upon the actions of his immediate superior. M. d'Ogny, director of the secret post-office, recognizes by a mark on the outside the despatches of the diplomats who were in the secret; they were sent to the Comte de Broglie by Guinard, a page at the palace, deciphered in the Comte's cabinet, and then handed over to Louis XV., with drafts of the proposed replies, to which the king affixed his signature, after making such corrections as he saw fit. The Baron de Breteuil, ambassador to Sweden in 1766, whom the king had requested to follow the course of events in that country with particular attention, the Comte Desalleurs, ambassador at Constantinople, M. de Vergennes, and M. de Saint-Priest were members of the secret body.*

The Comte de Broglie continued to superintend it even after he was exiled, as the result of an official disgrace which was really of no importance. To quote M.

* Gustave III. et la Cour de France, par M. A. Geffroy.

Geffroy once more: "Louis XV., with the assistance of these unknown agents, took pleasure in guiding the principal transactions himself. It may be that he was jealous of the horde of ministers, favorites, and mistresses by whom he was encompassed, and was glad of an opportunity to thwart them and fight them under cover, and to conspire against them, without taking the trouble to resist them openly. His underground policy was frequently more to his credit than the declared policy of the cabinet of Versailles."

M. Théophile Lavallée has reached a similar conclusion. "The secret correspondence of Louis XV.," he says, "proves that prince to have had, by royal instinct and family tradition, a deep sense of national greatness; it overflows with good sense, dignity, and patriotism. One cannot peruse it without deploring that so lofty a policy should have been sterilized by lack of strength of will, and that such deep insight into the true interests of France in the future should have gone for nought in the orgies of the Parc-aux-Cerfs."

Louis XV. did not lack intelligence,— he had that quality in abundance; nor did he lack moral sense, for while he was doing what was wrong, he had a very clear idea of the right. No, what he lacked was will-power, strength of purpose. He had had in his youthful days, and from time to time he still displayed, upright and clean intentions; but he was not animated with a sufficient degree of energy to repel the torrent of the

century's vice. In the words of his huntsman, Le Roy, whom Sainte-Beuve calls "a La Bruyère on horseback," "he despaired of ever being able to do what was right, because one is always inclined to look upon that which one lacks the courage to do, as impossible. To this point had this man gradually come, who, if he had been born to private life, would have been deemed, by virtue of his intellect and character, above the common herd, and what is properly called *un galant homme.*"

Despite his advancing years, he had preserved his graceful and commanding figure, and regular features; he was still somewhat reserved in conversation, but always refined and clever; his courtesy was beyond criticism, and he was extremely careful of his personal appearance.

"The king was still beloved by his people; they might well have hoped that he would at least adopt a manner of life suited to his years and his dignity, which would serve to throw a veil over the errors of the past, and justify the affection which Frenchmen had bestowed upon him in his youth. It was very hard to visit severe condemnation upon him. When he enthroned titular mistresses at court, they blamed the queen's excessive piety. They found fault with Mesdames because they did not foresee and seek to prevent the danger which would attend the king's forming an intimate circle around some new favorite. They sighed for Madame Henriette, twin-sister of the Duchess of Parma: that princess had some influence upon the king; and if she had lived, she would

have devoted herself to entertaining him in the bosom of his family, she would have attended the king in his little excursions, and would have done the honors of the little supper-parties which he loved so to give in his apartments." *

The Comte de Ségur, a man of wit and of society, who saw the last years of Louis XV., also speaks of him with a certain amount of sympathy. "This weak but well-meaning monarch," he says, in his charming Memoirs, "was in his youth the object of enthusiastic admiration which was little deserved; the harsh strictures upon his old age were no less exaggerated. Inheritor of the absolute power of Louis XIV., he reigned for sixty years without once laying himself open to the charge of having used his power cruelly. It is hard to find a prince who has not shared, to a greater or less degree, in the errors, the weaknesses, and follies of his time. Moreover, the French have always shown too little severity for offences of this description; but they demand at least that the stains shall disappear in the splendor of some ray of glory. In that event they become only too forgiving, and almost utter panegyrics upon these same faults, as committed by the chivalrous François I., the gallant Henri IV., and the majestic Louis XIV., while they make them the subject of bitter reproach to Louis XV."

Sovereigns are almost always the personification of the age in which they live. They seem to make the law,

* Mémoires de Madame Campan.

whereas on most occasions they simply follow it. The strongly contrasted characteristics of Louis XV. are reproduced in the society of which he was the head. He belongs to that period of dissolution and decomposition when, in the words of Chateaubriand, "Statesmen became men of letters and *vice versa*, great nobles became bankers, and farmers-general great nobles. The fashions were as absurd as art was degenerate: shepherdesses in paniers were painted on the walls of *salons* where colonels sat over the embroidery frame. Everything was out of joint in men's minds and their morals, — a sure sign of impending revolution. To see the monarch slumbering in the lap of debauchery, corrupt courtiers, designing or incapable ministers, *philosophes* attacking religion and the State; the nobles either ignorant, or tainted with the prevailing vices; ecclesiastics at Paris the disgrace of their order, and in the provinces slaves of prejudice: looking upon all these, one would have said they were a crowd of workmen in a tremendous hurry to tear down a noble edifice."

And yet there was no noticeable change. As the Comte de Ségur says, "The old social structure was undermined throughout its whole extent, and yet no exterior marks indicated that it was almost ready to fall. The change of morals was unobserved, because it had been gradual; the court etiquette was unchanged; there were the same throne, the same names, the same distinctions of rank, the same formalities. The Parliaments,

defying the power of the throne, albeit with outward expressions of respect, had become almost republican without suspecting it, and they were themselves giving the signal for revolution, while they thought that they were simply following the examples of their predecessors when they resisted the *concordat* of François I., and the fiscal despotism of Mazarin."

Louis XV., who, notwithstanding his many faults, was a shrewd and perspicacious observer, fully appreciated the gravity of the situation. But to apply an effective remedy, something more was needed than clever management or learning or wisdom: downright genius was indispensable. In the last years of the eighteenth century, to harmonize the freedom that had become necessary, with absolute authority, was a problem which the greatest and wisest of mankind might not have succeeded in solving. Louis XV. contented himself with saying, "Things will endure in their present shape as long as I live."

By his side reigned a minister whose character presented a most striking contrast to that of his master. In the same degree that Louis was reserved, taciturn, and bored, the Duc de Choiseul was impulsive, voluble, and good-humored. In the same degree that the monarch, albeit his piety, was but ill understood, had a deep and earnest religious faith, the minister was a disciple and follower of Voltaire. Beloved by parliamentarians, aristocrats, and men of letters alike, *bel esprit* and courtier rather than statesman, Choiseul, with his impatience and

audacity, his facility and brilliant capacity for affairs, his charming and never-failing learning, his entertaining and eloquent conversation, his faith in his lucky star, his habit of believing all manner of success attainable, his philosophy, which drew the line after Voltaire, and despised Rousseau, his inconsequent lavishness, which caused him no uneasiness on the score of the immense chasm it dug beneath the throne, because he relied upon the coming suppression of the monasteries and the tax upon ecclesiastical property to make up the deficit, — Choiseul was a perfect specimen of that courageous, fascinating, light-headed, and venturesome nobility which was marching laughingly on towards an abyss hidden by flowers.

"Never," said the Baron de Gleichen, in his "Souvenirs," "have I known a man who could scatter joy and contentment wherever he went, as he could. When he entered a room, he seemed to rummage in his pocket, and take from it an inexhaustible supply of jokes and gayety."

Notwithstanding his fascination and his good nature, the minister, whom Pope Benedict XIV. described as "a madman with a great deal of brains," had stirred up irreconcilable hatred in some hearts. His rivals and jealous detractors could not forgive his great eminence, and anxiously deliberated how best they could succeed in overturning the colossus which towered above everybody. In what *salon*, by what means, could they hope to plot and accomplish the downfall of this man who tormented them

so: that was the question which they put to themselves and one another unceasingly.

As Madame Campan observes, Louis at this time had relations with no women except those of a class so low that they could not be used for an intrigue which was likely to be of some duration; especially as the Parc-aux-Cerfs was a little harem whose inmates were constantly changing. The enemies of the omnipotent minister desired to fix the monarch's attention upon some one mistress who, by persistent, daily representations might succeed in overthrowing him. As a counterfoil to the grand vizier, a sultana was essential. Animated by such purposes, the enemies of the Duc de Choiseul cast their eyes upon the woman whose origin we are now about to recount, — the Comtesse du Barry.

II.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE COMTESSE DU BARRY.

ON the 9th January, 1829, a curious lawsuit was argued before the civil tribunal of original jurisdiction at Paris. The litigants were members of two families, each of which claimed to be the only true heirs of the Comtesse du Barry, and they were contending for a legacy bequeathed to the comtesse by the Duc de Cossé-Brissac, who was slaughtered by the revolutionists in 1792. The duc, naming his daughter, Madame de Mortemart, as sole legatee, had encumbered the succession with this legacy, which at first could not be paid. But under the Restoration, the Mortemart family having received a large share of the indemnity of a *milliard* granted to the *émigrés*, found itself in a position to carry out the last wishes of the Duc de Brissac.

The Gomard heirs presented themselves as claimants for the legacy, relying upon the following alleged extract from the baptismal register of the parish of Vaucouleurs, in the diocese of Toul, as the birth-certificate of Madame du Barry: —

"Jeanne, daughter of Jean-Jacques Gomard de Vaubernier and Anne Bécu, called Quantigny, was born the 19th August, 1746,

baptized the same day, having for godfather Joseph de Mange, and for godmother Jeanne de Birabin, who have signed with me.

L. GALON, *Vicar of Vaucouleurs.*
JOSEPH DE MANGE.
JEANNE DE BIRABIN.

The heirs on the mother's side, the Bécus, also came forward. They came, not only to claim their rights, but to contest the right of the Gomards to the inheritance of Madame du Barry. They maintained that the certificate produced by the latter was fictitious; that it had been invented in 1768 to flatter the comtesse; and they produced in opposition to it another certificate, taken from the registers of the civil jurisdiction of the town of Vaucouleurs on the 25th September, 1827, and thus conceived: —

"Jeanne, natural daughter of Anne Bécu, called Quantigny, was born the 19th August, 1743, and baptized the same day. She had for godfather Joseph Demange, and for godmother Jeanne Birabin."

By decree of the 9th January, 1829, — affirmed by the *Cour Royale* of Paris the 22d February, 1830, — the court of first instance of the Seine decided in favor of the Bécu heirs. The certificate produced by the Gomards was declared to be apocryphal. The court also found that in 1768 a genealogy had been obligingly made to order for the mistress of Louis XV. They had undertaken to transform an illegitimate into a legitimate child: the *filia nullius* Bécu was metamorphosed into Miss Gomard de Vaubernier. The particle was bestowed upon the godfather, Joseph Demange, who became Joseph de

Mange, while the godmother, Jeanne Birabin — *la Birabine*, as they called her in the country — figured as Madame de Birabin. The flattery of the courtiers went even farther than this. They rejuvenated the favorite, so to speak, and fixed the date of her birth, not upon the 19th August, 1743, when she actually was born, but three years later, the 19th August, 1746.

M. Le Roi, the extremely well-informed custodian of the library at Versailles, has told the truth concerning the origin of Madame du Barry in his very interesting work, "Curiosités Historiques." He gives her her true name, — Jeanne Bécu, — and proves the falsity of innumerable fables which have had a tendency to create an absolutely baseless legend on the subject of the royal mistress.

The child, who was one day to be called Madame la Comtesse du Barry, was the daughter of a peasant mother. From the cradle she had to struggle with adversity. A provisions contractor, M. Dumonceau, provided the means to procure an elementary education for her, solely from charity. He placed her in the convent of St. Anne, with a trousseau consisting of two pairs of sheets and six towels. It was said that she peddled haberdashery at a later period; and after that, under the name of Mademoiselle Rançon, which was the name of her mother's husband, she entered the employ of one Labille, man-milliner, Rue Saint-Honoré.

It would appear that the young shop-girl was not a pattern of virtue. Alas! with all the snares which beset

the feet of pretty girls, virtue and beauty are almost incompatible among the poorer classes. The milliner fell in with one of those men who are common in all capitals, Comte Jean du Barry. He told himself that such a fascinating young person ought to make her way in the world, and in a burst of enthusiasm he applied a seraphic appellation to his divinity; he called her Mademoiselle l'Ange [Miss Angel]. This angel, of an inferior category, presided at the gambling parties which the comte gave. It was at one of these that Dumouriez saw her in 1764. In the same year the Duc de Lauzun followed her when she left the Bal de l'Opéra, and found her ravishingly beautiful. Lebel, Louis' *valet-de-chambre*, who by reason of his peculiar functions was on the watch for suitable morsels for the king, thought that he would do well to put Mademoiselle l'Ange upon his list. He fancied that she would be a mere bird of passage, and would disappear, after a momentary incumbency of the Parc-aux-Cerfs. He was in error. The former milliner was destined to occupy a post which had been vacant for four years, — the post of successor to the Marquise de Pompadour.

Instead of aping the manners of the great ladies who wearied the king beyond measure, she showed herself as she was, a courtesan pure and simple, with all the cynicism, impulsiveness, and tricks of her trade. Louis felt his jaded senses awakened as if by a miracle. He was in raptures, and the new favorite seemed to him an exceptional being. He longed to cover her with a shower

of gold and jewels, and to make her the queen of all the mistresses of France or of Europe.

In his opinion an unmarried woman could not with propriety fulfill the duties of the office, and he speedily determined to transform her into a woman with a husband, and a title as well. Nothing was more easy than to find a nominal spouse, who would be well content to disappear with well-filled pockets, and never appear on the scene again.

This lucrative *rôle* Comte Jean du Barry was unable to assume himself, because he already had a wife; but he had a bachelor brother who seemed to have been born for the occasion. This obliging fellow was called Comte Guillaume du Barry; he was an indigent officer of marines, and lived with his mother at Toulouse. To summon him to Paris, marry him to Louis' mistress, give him a comfortable sum of money, and send him back to Toulouse, was a matter of only a day or two.

Queen Marie Leczinska died on the 24th June, 1768. Her husband mourned her but a short time, for during the month following he became enamoured of this so-called Jeanne Gomard de Vaubernier, this Anne Bécu, called l'Ange, the future Madame la Comtesse du Barry. It was on the 23d July that the marriage contract was executed before the notaries of the Châtelet at Paris, and on the 1st September this farcical union was solemnized at the church of St. Laurent at Auteuil. The nuptial blessing was no sooner pronounced than the groom was off for Toulouse, while the bride took up her abode at

the palace of Versailles. At the same time all Paris was humming the *chanson* of the "Bourbonnaise," a commonplace tune which did not deserve the popularity it attained: —

"La Bourbonnaise,
Arrivant à Paris,
A gagné des louis.
La Bourbonnaise
A gagné des louis
Chez un marquis.

"Pour apanage
Elle avait la beauté;
L'esprit, la volupté,
Pour apanage:
Mais ce petit trésor
Lui vaut de l'or.

"De paysanne,
Elle est dame a présent,
Elle est dame a présent, —
Mais grosse dame;
Porte les falbalas
De haut en bas.

"Fille gentille,
Ne désespérez pas;
Quand on des appas,
Qu'on est gentille,
On trouve tôt ou tard
Pareil hasard." *

* Translation: "La Bourbonnaise, on arriving at Paris, earned good wages in the establishment of a marquis.

"For stock-in-trade she had beauty, wit, and easy virtue; but this small outfit was a mint to her.

"From being a peasant, she has now become a lady, — a vulgar lady, to be sure; she is all furbelowed from top to toe.

"My pretty girl, do not despair. When one has influence, and is pretty, one is sure to find such a chance sooner or later."

Another *chanson* also went the rounds at Versailles. It was the new mistress's song of victory; for she already had her train of courtiers and poets:—

"Lisette, ta beauté séduit
Et charme tout le monde;
En vain la duchesse en rougit,
Et la princesse en gronde.
Chacun sait que Vénus naquit
De l'écume de l'onde.

"En vit-elle moins tous les dieux
Lui rendre un juste hommage,
Et Pâris, ce berger fameux,
Lui donner l'avantage,
Même sur la reine des cieux
Et Minerva la sage?

"Dans le sérail du Grand Seigneur
Quelle est la favorite?
C'est la plus belle au gré du cœur
Du maître qui l'habite;
C'est le seul titre à sa faveur,
Et c'est le vrai mérite." *

Louis XV. congratulated himself upon his choice. Madame du Barry was neither educated nor clever. She did not like to talk politics; she had no relatives at

* Translation: "Lisette, thy beauty fascinates and entrances all the world. In vain does the duchess blush that it is so, and the princess grumble about it. Every one knows that Venus was born of the foam of the sea.

"Was it the less true that she had all the gods at her feet, and that Paris, the famous shepherd, gave her the preference over the queen of Olympus herself, and the sage Minerva?

"In the seraglio of the Grand Seigneur who is the favorite? She who is the loveliest in the eyes of the master who dwells there. It is the only way to his favor, and is the true reward of merit."

court,— and these were very great recommendations in the eyes of the monarch. He would not have cared for another *grande dame*, like the Duchesse de Châteauroux, who would have arrived with a long procession of relatives and *protégés*, nor a politician in petticoats, like Madame de Pompadour, who would be forever stirring up the parliaments and the clergy. What he wanted was somebody to entertain him, — not a mentor.

III.

THE COMTESSE DU BARRY'S TRIUMPH.

WHAT will be the fate of the Comtesse du Barry? Will she be merely the ephemeral fancy of a day, like the damsels of the Parc-aux-Cerfs, or will she occupy officially the post of favorite? That was the question which everybody was asking. The important point was, whether she would or would not be presented. Bets were freely made upon this question at Versailles. The Duc de Choiseul, who looked askance upon the new comtesse, was opposed to her being presented; but the king desired that she should be, and in the end he had his way. He had made Madame du Barry's acquaintance in July, 1768, but it was not until the 22d April, 1769, that she was formally presented to him.

The ceremony was performed with the usual formalities. After receiving the orders of the king, who had been advised of the names of the lady making the presentation, or sponsor, and her two associates, who must always be ladies of the court circle, the recipient of the honor appeared at the door of the large cabinet, in full dress; that is to say, with her gown spread out upon a petticoat four ells and a half wide, with a long mantle

clasped at the waist, bodice to match, drooping feathers, and as many diamonds as she could make out to secure.

The Comtesse du Barry was presented by the Comtesse de Béarn. Louis' face was radiant with the joy which he felt in the triumph of the woman upon whom his choice had fallen. His days of fickleness were at an end. Madame du Barry needed no assistance in retaining her hold upon the affections of her royal lover, who was weary of his secret visits to the Parc-aux-Cerfs, for the necessity of keeping them secret made them burdensome to him. He closed the mysterious establishment, and furnished his new inamorata with apartments in the palace of Versailles, just above the suite which he occupied himself. He could visit her at any hour, without being seen, by a secret staircase leading from the Cour des Cerfs. A door opened upon a little landing, whence he could enter one of the closets adjoining the recess in the favorite's room. Her suite was a succession of boudoirs, each more charming than the others. It was the apotheosis of luxury. The clock in the bedroom represented the three Graces holding a vase in which was a revolving dial, and above was Cupid, pointing with his arrow to the hour. Most exquisite objects of art, marvels of decorative work, bronze, marble, lacquer, porcelain, and statuettes were scattered about in the greatest profusion in this paradise of debauchery.

"It was the wild dream of a courtesan," say MM. de Goncourt; "it was luxurious extravagance and profu-

sion gone mad. There were millions lavished upon fashionable whims, upon rare bits of *bijouterie*, lace, silk, and velvet; a perfect torrent of wealth; the royal treasury flowing out through the hands of a pretty woman upon tailors, dressmakers, and milliners."

Her life, passed entirely in furnishing and refurnishing, in giving orders and receiving bills, in making her toilet, and in buying everything under the sun, was a life of caprice and whim. Her apartments in the palace did not satisfy her, and Louis gave her a mansion in the town in Rue de l'Orangerie,* where she quartered her servants and her dependants.

At the beginning of 1769, she received an annuity of 100,000 livres charged upon the city of Paris, and an income of 10,000 livres upon the States of Bourgogne. On the 24th July of that year her generous lover, whose passion for her was ever growing, did homage to her charms by the gift of the beautiful *château* of Luciennes, purchased from the Duc de Penthièvre.

The favorite fairly revelled in her triumph. She had as fine an establishment, as great wealth, and as lofty a position as the Marquise de Pompadour had had.

Young, beautiful, and more than fascinating, with blue eyes, brown eyebrows, fair hair, a little Greek nose, red lips, a skin like satin, a sweet face with a touch of mischief in her expression, she shone with all the brilliancy of her twenty-five years. She was not a goddess of

* This mansion is to-day No. 2 in that street.

majestic mien, but a frolicsome, lively beauty, who, when arrayed in her most magnificent toilets, had an air of charming carelessness and *insouciance.* It is impossible to deny her charms. Louis XV. was like one bewitched.

The Maréchal de Richelieu, who was so harsh in his treatment of the Marquise de Pompadour, gave his unstinted approval to Madame la Comtesse du Barry. On the 25th June, 1769, the Marquise du Deffand wrote as follows to Horace Walpole: —

"The other day, in the country, while the master of the house (the king) was at his whist, the leader of the conspiracy (Richelieu) got up a little game of lansquenet to teach the mistress of the mansion (Madame du Barry). He lost two hundred and fifty louis. The master of the house laughed at him, and asked him how he came to lose at such a game as that. He replied by a passage from an opera: —

"'Le plus sage
S'enflamme et s'engage,
Sans savoir comment.' *

The master laughed, and so did all the troop."

However, there were some persons who declined to go into raptures over the new favorite's charms of person. Horace Walpole saw her in the chapel at Versailles in September, 1769. His admiration was very lukewarm, and he thus described the impression she made upon him, in

* Translation: "The wisest of men may lose his head and find himself involved, without knowing how."

a letter to George Montagu: "A front bench in the gallery had been reserved for us. Madame du Barry took her place below and opposite us; she was without rouge or powder, and indeed her toilet was not made. A strange way to exhibit herself, for she was near the altar, in the midst of the court, and where she could be seen by everybody! She is pretty, if one looks closely at her; yet there is so little out of the common in her appearance that I should never have dreamed of asking who she was. There was no insolence or arrogance or affectation in her demeanor. Her husband's sister was with her. In the upper gallery I espied, among a lot of prelates, the king, who is still a fine-looking man. One could but smile at this conglomeration of piety, parade, and vice."

Madame du Barry was the first to wonder at her own fate. Her transformation into a great lady seemed to her only a disguise. She was even more surprised when they undertook to make a politician of her. With no hatred to indulge, no ambition to gratify, and no schemes to execute, she asked only to be left to her toilets and decorations. Politics to her mind was an unmitigated bore. What had she to do with parliaments and clergy and diplomacy? She had very different matters in her head. Since her first day at court, her only aim had been to live on amicable terms with the ministers. She sent word to the Duc de Choiseul that if he chose to be on friendly terms with her, she was ready to meet him

half way. The person intrusted with this conciliatory message recalled the fact that mistresses overthrew ministers, but that the converse was not true. The duc contented himself by replying with a cold and indefinite promise to grant such requests of Madame du Barry as were just. The minister's enemies had very great difficulty, despite their unremitting urgency, in driving the pacific comtesse to the resolution to take up arms against him. At first her assaults upon him were mere skirmishes, — feints it would be better to say. The Marquise du Deffand wrote to Horace Walpole on the 2d November, 1769: "Grandpapa (a sobriquet bestowed upon Choiseul) receives little slights every day, such as not being invited to the supper-parties in the cabinets; and, at Madame du Barry's, when he is her partner at whist, grimaces and witticisms and shrugs of the shoulders, — in short, all varieties of petty boarding-school malice."

However, Choiseul's friends did not yet feel alarmed. On the 15th January, 1770, Madame du Deffand wrote, still to Walpole: "La dame du Barry seems to gain no influence, and there is no appearance that she ever will. She has neither affection nor dislike for anybody; she can say what she is told to say, like a parrot, but she is entirely free from ulterior views, selfishness, or passion. It is not with such dispositions as hers that one succeeds in acquiring power."

But the confidence of the marquise as to the Duc de

Choiseul's security did not long endure. "The Controller-General is at Madame du Barry's feet, and does not blush to be there," she wrote on the 3d March, 1770: "he is following, so he says, the example of all ministers who desire to retain the ear of kings, and to be useful to them. So far our friend is all right, but I doubt whether the year will pass without great changes." In the same letter, she added: "The king is still very much in love, but without exhibiting any great amount of consideration for the lady, whom he treats much like any courtesan. However, she will behave well or ill according to the person who governs her: her own character counts for nothing. She may be able to assist in fulfilling the desires of other people, but never with the energy and success which she would have if she shared them herself. She will repeat her lesson, but on any point on which she has not been coached, her own wit will never supply the deficiency."

About this time a malicious skit was put in circulation, which is quoted in one of the letters of the marquise (the 2d November, 1769). It was supposed to recite the grievances of the Duc de Choiseul, friend of Madame de Pompadour, and foe of Madame du Barry. It was sung to the tune of "Vive le Vin, vive l'Amour!"

"Vive le Roi! Foin de l'Amour!
Le drôle m'a joué d'un tour,
Qui peut confondre mon audace.
La Du Barry, pour moi de glace,

Va, dit-on, changer mes destins.
Jadis, je dus ma fortune aux catins;
Je leur devrai donc ma disgrace." *

Madame du Barry allowed herself to be drawn into the struggle almost in spite of herself. Three men urged her to it, — the Duc d'Aiguillon, the Abbé Terray, and the Chancellor Maupeou. Surrounded by this triumvirate, the comtesse smilingly entered the lists of politics. We can easily understand how great must have been the indignation felt by so proud and bold a man as the Duc de Choiseul upon finding himself confronted by such an adversary. He chafed at his bit. His power was doomed to last but a few months more; but before his fall he was to witness the arrival in France of the princess whose marriage with the dauphin had been negotiated by him, — that charming poetic maiden who brightened up the dull court like a ray of purest sunshine; that touching victim of a cruel fate, whose lovely yet august figure forms a startling contrast to that of the Du Barry, and whose name one cannot utter except with an indescribable feeling of sympathy and pity and respectful emotion, — Marie-Antoinette.

At the moment when all minds were full of the approaching marriage of the young archduchess to the prince who was one day to be known as Louis XVI., a

* Translation: "*Vive le roi!* a plague upon Love! The wretch has played me a trick which may be too much even for my assurance and conceit. La Du Barry, cold as ice to me, will change my future prospects, they say. In the first place, I owed my good fortune to harlots, and I shall owe my disgrace to them."

novice at the Carmelite convent of St. Denis was praying for the welfare of France, threatened with dire disaster. That novice was one of the daughters of Louis XV. While selfish licentiousness reigned supreme at the palace of Versailles, the spirit of self-sacrifice sought shelter in a convent near the last abode of the French kings. Madame du Barry was the scandal of the age; Madame Louise de France its edification.

IV.

MADAME LOUISE DE FRANCE, INMATE OF THE CARMELITE CONVENT.

IT was in 1770, Madame Louise de France, youngest of the daughters of the king, was in her thirty-third year. "For several years," says Madame Campan, "Madame Louise lived in strict seclusion. I used to read to her five hours a day: my voice often expressed the weariness of my chest, and the princess would prepare *eau sucrée*, and put it by my side, apologizing for making me read so long, by pleading the importance of finishing a course of reading which she had marked out for herself."

Why was this king's daughter in such haste to finish this course of reading? That was her secret. Apparently she led a life of luxury; really she was quietly serving a mysterious apprenticeship in renunciation and self-sacrifice, accustoming herself to bear extreme heat or cold, and to wear beneath her fine linen the coarse serge worn by the Carmelites. In the evening, when she was alone in her apartment, she would put out her wax candles, and light tallow ones, so as to become used to the odor, which at first she could hardly endure. "Hers was a noble soul," says Madame Campan; "she loved noble things, and she has often interrupted my reading to exclaim, 'Oh, how grand,

how noble!' She had it in her power to do but one glorious deed, — to exchange a palace for a cell, and her fine clothes for a robe of sackcloth. She did it."

Some writers, who, having no religious feeling themselves, insist upon keeping their eyes always on the earth, and never looking heavenward, have undertaken to ascribe the pious resolution of Madame Louise to worldly motives, and they come dangerously near representing a Carmelite nun as an ambitious schemer. M. Honoré Bonhomme, author of the work entitled, "Louis XV. et sa Famille," takes a juster view of the subject when he says: "When the queen died, Louis XV. had a spasm of repentance; there was reason to think that he would change his habits for the better: but no. Soon a new favorite, the Du Barry, made her appearance, and we know what followed. Now, it was after this notorious relapse of her father, it was when she saw that he had plunged, body and soul, deeper than ever into the shameful sea of vice, that Madame Louise, torn with grief, and utterly hopeless, hastened to pray to God in the austere seclusion of the cloister, not for pardon for herself, — she needed it not; not for the peace and tranquillity which she lacked, — she had voluntarily sacrificed them; but she prayed to God with heartfelt, tearful fervor for her father's conversion, for the salvation of the king's soul."

On the 22d April, 1769, Madame du Barry was officially presented at court; on the 30th January, 1770, Madame Louise instructed Monseigneur de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, to ask the king's leave for her to enter the convent.

Louis, deeply moved and profoundly surprised at so unexpected a communication, was dumb at first. At last he exclaimed several times, "It is cruel! it is cruel!" and postponed his reply for two weeks. But he finally gave his consent. The Abbé Terray, the princess's confessor, brought her a letter from the king, dated the 20th February, 1770, which ran thus: —

"Monseigneur the Archbishop, my dear daughter, having communicated to me all that you have said and written to him, will surely have reported to you all that I said to him in reply. If it is for God alone, I can make no opposition to his will and determination. You should have reflected solemnly, so I have nothing more to ask you. It would seem that your plans are all made; you can mention it to your sisters whenever you think best. Compiègne is out of the question; outside of that you can choose where you will, and I should be very sorry to force your inclination in any way. I have made enforced sacrifices, but this will be entirely voluntary on your part. May God give you strength to support your new life, for when you have taken the step, you cannot retract it. I embrace you with all my heart, my dear daughter, and give you my blessing."

There was at St. Denis a Carmelite monastery in such straits financially that the nuns had been obliged to retrench in the matter of food, which was frugal enough before, and the baker had begun to refuse them bread. It was this establishment, reduced to the last extremity, and threatened with extinction, from lack of funds, which Madame Louise selected for her asylum. Just when the nuns were undergoing a nine days' fast, and beseeching God to insure the continued existence of their community, Louis XV. gave to his daughter the consent which she so earnestly sought.

Madame Louise still kept her purpose entirely secret, particularly from her sisters, whose comments she dreaded.

On the 5th April, she received the following note, dated at Choisy, from her father: —

"I embrace you with all my heart, my dear daughter; I send you the order for your departure, which you mention, and I will do what you wish for your servants, and will carry out all your other arrangements. You will have only a word from me to-night, my little heart, for it is late."

On the 11th April, in the morning, the princess took carriage at Versailles, attended by a maid of honor and an equerry, giving the order: "To St. Denis." She wore a silk dress under a great black cape, and a high bonnet with a red bow. Upon reaching St. Denis, she said, "To the Carmelites."

The door of the cloister opened, and Madame Louise disappeared. Her maid of honor, the Princesse de Ghistelles, and her equerry, M. d'Haranguier de Quincerot, supposed that she would come out again as soon as mass had been said. Imagine their amazement when the princess sent word to them from within, and they read the order of the king!

The sisters of the novice learned during the day what had happened. At first they were in despair; but after the first flush of indignation, they came to feel only the deepest respect for so devout a resolution. In his valuable work upon the Daughters of Louis XV., M. Édouard de Barthélemy quotes the letters of Madame Adélaïde and

Madame Sophie to their sister. Madame Adélaïde wrote as follows: —

"You can imagine better than I can describe what my heart has felt and still feels. My grief was quite equal to my surprise; but you are happy, and I am content. Pray God for me, my dear heart: you know my needs, and they are more urgent to-day than ever. I shall certainly come to see you as soon as I can, — as soon as I have the strength and you feel like receiving me without putting yourself out. Adieu, my dear heart! I am going to vespers, where I fear I may be a little inattentive. Love me always, and believe that I return it tenfold."

Madame Sophie's letter was in these words: —

"If I had not told you again and again, dear heart, that I suspected you of a longing to become a nun, I believe you would never have done it. I forgive you freely for not mentioning it to me. Your sacrifice is noble, because it is entirely voluntary; but do you suppose that the involuntary sacrifice which you impose upon me in thus abandoning us is any easier to bear? Never for an instant doubt my love, dear heart, or that I shall love you all my life, and shall come to see you in all haste as soon as you will permit me. I embrace you with all my heart."

A circular letter to the king's representatives at foreign courts notified them of the "exemplary and touching event" which had occurred, and the Pope, Clement XIV., wrote the Most Christian King a letter which read like a song of thanksgiving.

Madame Campan relates that the first time she visited the princess at the convent, she met her coming out of the laundry, where her royal hands had been at work in the tub. Said she to her former reader: "I sadly abused your young

lungs for two years before I carried out my plan. I knew that here I could only read such books as tend to secure our salvation, and I was anxious to run through all the historical writers who had aroused my interest." Going on to speak of her chosen lot in life, she said: "Believe me when I say that the moral writers are right in declaring that true happiness does not dwell in palaces; I have become convinced of that. If you wish to be happy, I advise you to seek a retreat like this, where the activity of one's mind can content itself with uplifting aspirations towards a better world than this."

The grated doors closed forever upon the daughter of Louis XV. The chasm between the world and her became impassable. What a contrast between the palace and the cloister! Yesterday, all the splendor and magnificence of radiant galleries, marble stairways, and stately apartments; to-day, humility, poverty, and the rigorous and monotonous conventual existence! Yesterday, robes of gold and brocade, laces, precious gems, and diadems; to-day, the robe of sackcloth and the earthen cup! Yesterday, the festive animation of the bristling world; to-day, the silence and gloom of the grave.

It is said that certain courtiers, misunderstanding the motives of Madame Louise, criticised or pitied her; that the Maréchale de Mirepoix called her "a madwoman, who had entered the convent to make trouble at court, under the cloak of Heaven;" that the Duc d'Ayen thought he was very clever when he said: "If Madame Louise is in such

a hurry to get to Paradise, she may be very certain of not passing eternity with her family."

The Marquise du Deffand, playing the *philosophe*, writes in one of her letters: "This exploit has not made a very great sensation. People shrug their shoulders, pity her weak-mindedness, and go on to talk of something else."

The satirical marquise has much compassion for a princess who, as she puts it, "makes herself miserable for a whim." Madame du Deffand is in error; with all her wit, she is herself more deserving of compassion than Madame Louise. There are vastly more whims in her *salon* than in the Carmelite convent. As for Louis XV., at the bottom of his heart he thinks his daughter fortunate. "But, Sire," said Madame du Barry one day, "Madame Louise will have a wretched life at the convent." "Not at all," he replied; "she will be more nearly at peace than any other of the family. Quietism was not invented for nothing."

It may even be that it sometimes happened to him, dissipated prince that he was, to conceive a distaste for his palaces, and to feel what might be called homesick for the cloister. Charles V. is not the only sovereign who has dreamed of living the life of a monk. Even the most abandoned voluptuaries have their occasional moments of mysticism.

The daughter of the terrestrial king now puts her trust in the King of Heaven. As she is no longer bound to the

perishable throne, but to the imperishable, immortal Cross, she experiences, in her voluntary captivity, a higher sense of freedom than she ever knew in the vortex of the court. No, no, she has no regretful thoughts of the mob of courtiers crowding about the doors of the Œil-de-Bœuf. She has no sigh for the splendors of the palace, where care and anxiety dwell, where, as La Bruyère has it, one rises and retires upon selfishness. She longs not for the vulgar fawning, the deafening clamor which wearies the ear and the heart alike; the protestations of zealous affection, which are prompted only by selfish scheming, ambition, and greed; the pomp and vain show which afford not a moment of true happiness. The rules of the cloister, strict and harsh as they are, seem less irksome than the bonds of etiquette. To all worldly treasure she prefers the privilege of breathing an earnest prayer to Christ, of shedding tears of pious ecstasy. No more scandal, hypocrisy, and shameful deeds here, but repose and real adoration!

It is interesting to notice that Madame Louise's *angel* at the Monastery of St. Denis, that is to say, the nun who was charged with the duty of instructing her in the customs and duties of the Carmelites, was Sister Julie, — in the world Julienne de MacMahon, of the illustrious family to which belonged Marshal MacMahon, recently at the head of the French government.

Several contemporaneous publicists have spoken rather lightly of the works which have been written relating to the

religious vocation of the royal Carmelite, — those of the Abbé Proyart and the Comtesse de Drohojowska, for instance, and the Comte de Chambord's letter to the Holy Father. For my own part, I confess that such productions are extremely touching to me.

Is it not a pleasant thought that, not far from the boudoir where a Du Barry dragged the royal power in the dust, there was a narrow cell where a descendant of Saint Louis sought, by the power of prayer, to avert the wrath of God? Since debauchery has its priestesses of vice and degradation, purity, by way of reprisal, must have its virgins and heroines. Blasphemy, vile and cynical, must be met by prayer, ardent and exalted. To compensate for all the assaults upon divine majesty, virtues must exist so sublime and enthusiastic as to seem exaggerated, almost insane to profane eyes. To secure momentary oblivion of the madness of debauchery, just men must display what Saint Paul called the madness of the Cross. It was for this very reason — that, in spite of the mass of vice, there were still some noble souls who preserved the treasure of purity in the sanctuary of their conscience — that the eighteenth century was not destroyed at one blow, and that, in the cataclysm of the Revolution, the women of that social body, which was supposed to be so corrupt and frivolous, recalled, by their greatness of soul, and their firmness and courage upon the scaffold, the strength of mind of the early Christians, and the saintly courage of the martyrs. Who can say? It may be that if Madame Louise had not joined

the Carmelite community, the august woman, whose first appearance at the palace of Versailles we are about to witness, would not have borne herself with such unfailing dignity before her persecutors, or have faced her executioners with such magnificent courage.

V.

THE CHILDHOOD OF MARIE-ANTOINETTE.

ON the 2d November, 1755, the Feast of the Dead, a terrible earthquake engulfed the city of Lisbon. On the same day a child was born at Vienna, to whom Destiny had allotted the most tragic fate, — a princess who was, like the Saviour, to have her Feast of Palms and her Golgotha, and to experience all the joy and anguish, the triumph and suffering, which have ever fallen to the lot of woman.

This existence, doomed to terminate in a catastrophe which far exceeds in horror the most memorable instances of the stern decrees of fate in ancient times, opened in the tranquillity which is so often the precursor of an impending tempest. The Empress Maria Theresa, a woman of genius and of heart as well, was equally worthy of admiration as sovereign, as wife, and as mother. No less simple than dignified in her bearing, she needed none of the factitious aid of etiquette to inspire veneration.

A few days before the birth of Marie-Antoinette, the Duc de Tarouka laid a wager with the empress that she would bring an archduke into the world. When he lost his wager, he presented her Majesty with a model in porcelain of a kneeling figure, holding out to her a tablet on which were engraved four lines of the Italian poet Metastasio, which

may be translated thus: "I have lost; the royal maiden has forced me to pay. But if it be true that she resembles you, the world will be the gainer."

Maria Theresa was careful to give her daughter instruction in many useful matters while the latter was still quite young. The empress showed her daughter her own shroud, woven with her royal hands, and took her into the vault where their ancestors lay at rest. "My subjects," said the empress, "are now paying me the homage of which these who lie here were once the recipients. I shall be forgotten, as they have been."

In their daily drives the empress and her husband frequently allowed the progress of their carriage to be stopped by more modest equipages, and would quietly take their place in the line. As Goethe has said, the imperial family were nothing but Germans of the higher middle class.

Maria Theresa walked about the city with her daughters like a private individual. She used to make unceremonious calls upon Count Palfy and Prince Esterhazy and von Kinsky. Her welcome of a nobleman or an artisan, a diplomat or an artist, was equally gracious and engaging. She allowed little Marie-Antoinette to play with the child Mozart.

The young archduchess grew to maturity under this tender and healthy influence. Her father, the Emperor Francis, seemed to be even more attached to her than to his other children. In 1765 he went to Innsprück, to be present at the marriage of the Archduke Leopold to a Spanish infanta. He had gone but a short distance from Schön-

brunn on his journey when he ordered the coachman to stop. "Go and find the Archduchess Marie-Antoinette," said he to one of his suite; "I must see her once more." The little princess came, and her father kissed her, with tears in his eyes. He asked God's blessing upon her; and it was only by making a great effort of his will that he parted from her. He was never to see her again; for a few days later he died suddenly of an apoplectic shock. Marie-Antoinette never forgot the last look which her father gave her. As he cast upon her that look, overflowing with affection and anxiety, had he a presentiment of the impending catastrophe?

One day Maria Theresa questioned the clairvoyant Gassner as to the future of the young princess. "Is my Antoinette destined to lead a happy life?" she asked him. Gassner turned pale, and said nothing. As he was urged by the empress to reply, he said reluctantly, "Madame, every back has its cross to bear."

But let us have done with these gloomy thoughts of the future. The most brilliant destiny was apparently in store for the young archduchess. It was she who was to unite the families of Hapsburg and Bourbon; she who was to be queen of France! Maria Theresa took great pleasure in dreaming that fair dream. In 1766, a Parisian woman of influence, who had succeeded in making her *salon* famous throughout Europe, — Madame Geoffrin, — journeyed to Poland on a visit to Stanislas Poniatowski. She broke her journey at Vienna, where she received a welcome which stirred her pride.

"I think I must be in a dream," she wrote, on the 12th June, 1766, to M. Bautin, Receiver-General; "I am better known here than in Rue Saint-Honoré, and for the last fortnight my journey has made an incredible amount of talk." Farther on in the same letter she speaks of Marie-Antoinette: "The empress has requested me to write home to France that I have seen the little lady, and how beautiful I thought her."

Madame Geoffrin took the princess on her knees. "Ah," said she, "this is a little girl I should much like to take away with me!" "Take her; take her," rejoined the empress, gayly, for she was dreaming of Versailles and the dauphin. From that time on, she strove to form the future dauphine on the model of the French court. Speech, literature, novels, history, fashions, plays, books, almanacs, pictures, — all the surroundings of the young archduchess were French.

As M. Feuillet de Conches has said, in the eloquent preface to his Collection: "The wind from France ruffled the fair locks of Marie-Antoinette." She danced with Noverre, studied elocution with Sainville, read the tragedies of Racine and the fables of La Fontaine with Dufresne. A fashionable hairdresser, Larsonneur, was imported from Paris, with milliners and dressmakers, to arrange the young princess's wardrobe and dress her hair. Her truest adornment, however, was the grace which Nature gave her.

As Madame la Comtesse d'Armaillé has said, in a captivating little sketch called "Mother and Daughter," "There

are certain women's faces whose beauty seems to strike us only when they are under the stimulus of some excitement; others there are which accord perfectly with the freshness of Nature, the poetic loveliness of lonely fields. Marie-Antoinette's beauty was of the latter type. Her tall and slender form, her light and graceful step, recalled the heroines of the old German legends. Undine was not more bewitching when she abandoned the shelter of the waves, and lived among mortals for a few short days. The princess's blue eyes, whose limpid purity equalled that of the waters of the Danube, were melting and sparkling at once. Her rosy, smiling mouth was rendered doubly charming by the little dimple in her chin. Her light-brown hair, pushed back in the fashion of the day, exposed to view her pure and noble forehead, and her slender and graceful neck. Everything in her face and figure told of distinguished birth, openness of disposition, and kindness of heart."

She was no longer a child, nor was she yet a woman. She had that mixture of knowledge and ignorance, of intelligence and innocence, which is so attractive and fascinating. Already a shadow of sadness flitted now and again across her pure and radiant features, brightened by the sweetest of smiles.

"Poor women!" said Mademoiselle Rosa Ferrucci, a young girl whose touching story has been told by Abbé Perreyve; "we poor women are more powerless than the leaves which are torn from the trees and scattered abroad by the first breath of air; our childhood is barely over, when our hearts,

which can only love and endure, are torn by a thousand conflicting emotions, joyous and sad."

Versailles appeared to Marie-Antoinette with the enchantment which distance lends. A French priest, Abbé de Vermond, who was her preceptor after 1768, told her marvellous tales of that abode of bliss, where she was destined to shine with such lustre. But the thought that she must part from her dearest mother, from her loving family and the good people of Vienna, who are famous for their devoted affection for their sovereigns, grieved the tender heart of the princess in advance. To-day when sovereigns give their daughters in marriage, they are almost certain of seeing them again; but formerly it was not so. In those days, partings were likely to be forever.

We can imagine the suffering of Maria Theresa as she said to herself: "Soon I shall have to say farewell forever to my beloved daughter, of whom I am so proud. Soon I must give her my blessing and a mother's kiss for the last time." Like many another mother, the empress's heart was made sad by the very occurrence which she had sought with the utmost earnestness to bring to pass.

The alliance, which was in strict accord with the policy of Austria, was determined upon. Marie-Antoinette was to be dauphine of France. As the moment of her daughter's departure approached, the emotion of the empress grew deeper and deeper. She took her in her arms, kissed her time and time again, and made her sleep in the same room with herself. Longing to retain the treasure she was on the

point of losing, she would have been glad to stay the flight of time. Nor was Marie-Antoinette less sad and anxious than her mother.

On the 23d January, 1770, she received the wedding-ring from the dauphin, and twenty-three years later — twenty-three years, day for day — But no, let us not touch yet, even in thought, upon the last dread catastrophe!

On the 16th April, the Marquis de Durfort went to the imperial palace, and in the name of the Most Christian King formally made the request for the archduchess's hand for the dauphin. On the 17th, the princess renounced her claim to the Austrian succession. On the 18th, the *fêtes* were begun at Vienna, and they continued until the 21st, — the day fixed for the departure of the archduchess.

On the 19th, she was married by proxy, the dauphin being represented by the Archduke Maximilian. The signing of the imperial register took place at the palace Von der Burg. It was said that when Maria Theresa took the pen her hand trembled.

The dauphin having expressed a wish that his *fiancée* should personally declare her assent to the marriage, Marie-Antoinette had written to him: "I thank you for the very kind expressions of which you make use; I am very deeply touched and honored by them, and I appreciate my obligations to you for such kindliness of feeling. The example and the teachings of my glorious and loving mother have inspired in me the desire to fulfil all my duties, and, with God's help, I hope that my earnest efforts may make me

worthy of my destiny. You were pleased to ask that my own consent to your choice should accompany that of the empress-queen, and you must, you say, take me as a gift from myself. I may reply, since she permits me, that I have received my mother's commands with no less pleasure than respect. You will find in me a faithful and devoted wife, with no other thought than to employ such powers as I possess to please you and merit your affection."

The city of Vienna was in holiday attire and in mourning at the same time. Shouts of gladness were mingled with tears. Three days of seclusion, ending with the administration of the sacrament, were followed by a visit to the tomb of the emperors. The archduchess knelt, and invoked the blessing of her ancestors.

At last she must depart; the 21st April has arrived. Farewell to the patriarchal residence, the palace Von der Burg! Farewell to the shady walks of Schönbrunn! Farewell to the blue and limpid lakes of Laxenbourg! Farewell, ye good people of Vienna, who weep for the young exile! Ah, be she peasant or empress, the mother who for the last time looks upon the face and hears the voice of her daughter follows her every movement with her eyes, and intrusts her to the hand of Providence; and then, seeking her in vain, enters her lonely chamber, closes the door, and falls upon her knees in an agony of grief! The mother who has known the anguish and heartrending torture of separation will understand what took place in the heart of Maria Theresa.

The departure of Marie-Antoinette reminds me of a *chanson* once on everybody's lips, but forgotten long ago, the distant echo of which moves me almost to tears at this moment, doubtless because my mother used to sing it to me in my childhood: —

"Ici commence ton voyage.
Si tu n'allais pas revenir!
Ta pauvre mère est sans courage
Pour te quitter, pour te bénir.
Travaille bien, fais ta prière:
La prière donne du cœur,
Et quelquefois pense à ta mère,
Cela te portera bonheur.
Adieu, ma fille, adieu!
À la grâce de Dieu!

"Elle s'en va, douce exilée,
Gagner son pain, sous d'autres cieux.
Longtemps encor, dans la vallée,
Sa mère la suivit des yeux,
Puis, lorsque sa douleur amère
N'eut plus sa fille pour témoin,
Elle pleura, la pauvre mère,
L'enfant qui lui disait de loin:
Adieu, ma mère, adieu!
A la grâce de Dieu!" *

* "Here thy journey begins. Oh, if thou shouldst never return! Thy poor mother has no courage to take leave of thee or to give thee her blessing. Labor faithfully, and pray; for prayer gives strength. And think sometimes of thy mother, — that will bring thee good luck. Adieu, my daughter, adieu! May God's blessing go with thee!

"She has gone, dear exiled one, to earn her bread under other skies. Still for a long time her mother's eyes follow her through the valley; but when her bitter grief can be indulged without her daughter witnessing it, she weeps, poor mother, for her separation from the child who called back to her from afar: Adieu, dear mother, adieu! May God's blessing stay with thee!"

Weber says in his Memoirs: "It is hard to disbelieve in presentiments, when one has witnessed such leave-takings as those between Marie-Antoinette and her family, her servants, and her country. Men and women abandoned themselves to their grief, nor did any one return to his house until the last courier who attended her was lost to sight; and then they went home only to lament with their families the loss that was felt by all alike."

The die was cast! Leaving home and friends, never more to return, the maiden of fourteen years was already under the fatal spell which was impelling her towards the abyss.

Photogravure Goupil & Cie

Printed by GOUPIL & C° of PARIS, for the CLUB OF ODD VOLUMES

VI.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE'S ARRIVAL IN FRANCE.

AS Maria Theresa pressed Marie-Antoinette to her heart for the last time, she handed her a paper of great value, which contained most judicious advice. This masterpiece of maternal solicitude, written by the empress with her own hand, was entitled, "Rules to be read every month." It began thus: "*On this 21st April, the day of our parting.* When you awake, you will say your morning prayers on your knees as soon as you leave your bed; and read some good book for a little while, even if it is not more than fifteen minutes, without attending to anything else, or speaking to anybody. Everything depends upon beginning the day well, and upon the spirit in which it is begun, which may make even the most trifling actions creditable and praiseworthy."

Maria Theresa went on to enter into all the details of a pious existence. "I do not know," said she, "whether the custom of ringing the *Angelus* obtains in France; but do you devote a few moments to meditation at that hour: in your heart, at least, if not in public. If your confessor approves, you will receive communion every six weeks, also on the great feasts of the Church, and particularly the feast

of the Holy Virgin: on those days, or the day before, do not forget the especial veneration of your family for the Holy Virgin, with whose particular protection it has at all times been honored. Do not read any book, however harmless it may seem, without first asking your confessor's approval. This point is so much the more essential to observe in France, because books are continually being published there which teem with grace and learning, but which contain, under cover of these attractive elements, many things most harmful from a moral and religious standpoint. I implore you, therefore, my daughter, to read no book whatsoever, not even a pamphlet, without consulting your confessor. I ask of you, my dearest, this most striking proof of your affection and your regard for the advice of a loving mother who has no desire except for your welfare and happiness."

These rules, to be read every month, were brought to a close with these simple and touching words: "Never fail to remember the anniversary of your dear father's death, nor of mine when it comes to pass. Meanwhile, you can take my birthday as a day on which to pray for me."

The youthful bride began her journey to France. The heavens were resplendent with the rays of a joyous spring-time sun.

"All Nature smiled upon this new Iphigenia, who directed her steps with the same proud confidence towards Hymen and the sword. O merciful God! why didst thou not interrupt that royal progress, that triumphant progress of

grandeur and youth and beauty? Why didst thou not rescue the royal child from the heartrending fate which awaited her? Ah, how happy would have been her death then, in comparison with that which was in store for her at the hands of infamous murderers! Austria would have received with pious emotion the mortal remains of the daughter of the Hapsburgs. The prayers of a Christian mother would have accompanied her spotless soul to its everlasting home, and France, afflicted by the unforeseen blow, would also have mourned for the sweet young princess, and for the hopes blighted by her untimely death." *

On the 6th May, 1770, Marie-Antoinette arrived at Schutteren, the last German village before Kehl and the bridge across the Rhine. There she saw the soil of France for the first time. She heard the music of the waters of the Rhine, the poetic and majestic stream so often, alas! turbulent and colored with blood, — the stream which now flows between two German banks, but which then bathed the soil of France upon one shore.

On the Ile du Rhin had been built a pavilion called the "Pavillon de l'Échange." It contained a large hall, with a smaller apartment on each side: one for the ladies and gentlemen of the Viennese court to whom had been intrusted the duty of accompanying the princess to the threshold of her adopted country; the other for her French suite, — her maid of honor, the Comtesse de Noailles, her *dame d'atours*, the Duchesse de Cossé; four ladies in wait-

* Madame la Comtesse d'Armaillé, La Mère et la Fille.

ing; the Comte de Saulx-Tavannes, knight of honor, Comte de Tessé, first equerry, the Bishop of Chartres, first chaplain, with the other officers and equerries and her body-guards.

There took place the symbolical ceremony of delivering the bride to her new countrymen. The pavilion was adorned with tapestries, of which an unfortunate selection had been made. "The subject," says Goethe, then a student at the University of Strasbourg, "was nothing less than the story of Jason, Medea, and Crœsus. At the left of the throne was seen the ill-fated bride, in the throes of the most cruel of deaths; on the right, Jason, in a delirium of grief, was bewailing the loss of his children, who lay dead at his feet; while the Fury who slew them was making her escape upon her chariot with its team of dragons."

As he viewed the preparations, the future author of "Faust" cried, "In Heaven's name, can it be that the most frightful instance of hymeneal misery is to be thus inconsiderately forced upon a young princess at her first coming into her new estates? Is there no one among the French artists and decorators who realizes that a picture is like an acted play in its effect upon the senses and the soul, and that it often arouses presentiments of evil?"

When Marie-Antoinette entered the Pavillon de l'Échange, it was dark and threatening. A heavy black cloud obscured the view of the Strasbourg side of the river, and moved slowly towards the island. The three commissioners appointed by the king were awaiting her in the centre

of the hall. About noon, the door on the Austrian side opened, and the dauphine was seen in the doorway. She walked to the platform in the centre, and listened to the reading of the commissioners' powers and the act of delivery. These formalities at an end, the members of her Austrian suite passed before the former archduchess for the last time, kissed her hand, and returned to the Austrian *salon*, the door of which was closed behind them.

The dauphine then changed her garments throughout. "When she had been entirely re-apparelled, so that she retained no single article coming from a foreign court, not even her stockings (such was the invariable custom on such occasions), the doors opened, and the young princess, fixing her eyes upon the Comtesse de Noailles, threw herself into her arms, and begged her, with tears in her eyes, and with heartfelt earnestness, to lead and advise her, to be in everything her guide and her staff. One could but admire this fascinating proceeding: with a single smile she won all hearts, and in this enchanting personality, instinct with animation truly French, a certain august serenity, aided, it may be, by the majestic pose of her head upon her shoulders, recalled the daughter of the Cæsars." *

The ceremony of the exchange was finished. Upon reaching the French shore of the Rhine, the dauphine entered one of the king's carriages, and drove to Strasbourg. The storm which had been threatening for some hours broke at last. The Pavillon de l'Échange was sub-

* Mémoires de Madame Campan.

merged beneath a pouring rain, and the shouts of the crowd were mingled with the roaring of the thunder.

On the next day, May 8th, Marie-Antoinette repaired to the Cathedral of Strasbourg. Before the great door stood a young prelate clad in a golden chasuble, cross in hand, and mitre on his head, Prince Louis de Rohan.

"Madame," said he, "two nations met together in this temple eagerly return thanks to the God of Empires, who by these solemn and welcome nuptials puts the seal to their mutual happiness, and cements an alliance whose purpose has ever been to protect religion, and promote peace. You see that Alsace is overflowing with joy, and France awaits in your person the fulfilment of her dearest wish. In the outburst of gladness which will be visible on every side, recognize, Madame, the same emotion which caused tears to flow at Vienna, and which leaves in the hearts of those who must be sundered from you, the most heartfelt and affectionate regret. Thus is the Archduchess Antoinette known already, even in a land where she has never been seen. Such celebrity is oftentimes the result of high birth alone; but in your case, Madame, it is the rightful meed of your virtue and your grace; above all, it is the result of your reputation as the possessor of those natural, kindly qualities which the loving care of an ever-illustrious mother has fostered and made perfect in you. In our eyes you will be the living image of the revered empress, who has long been the admiration of all Europe, as she will be of the generations to come. The soul of Maria Theresa is to be linked with the

soul of the Bourbons. Of a union so much to be desired, an age of gold should be born; and our nephews, who live under the happy empire of Antoinette and Louis-Auguste, will witness the perpetuation of the happiness which we enjoy under the sway of Louis the Well-Beloved."

The man who uttered these words was the future Cardinal de Rohan, the unhappy hero of the affair of the necklace.

Paris, Versailles, all France, indeed, were in a state of excitement. Nothing was talked about but the expected arrival of the dauphine. Decorators went from town to town, preparing apartments for her in advance. Sixty new travelling carriages awaited her at Strasbourg.

At Paris the shops of the court tailors were thronged by those who came to stare at the garments made for the fêtes that were to celebrate her arrival. People spoke of a display of fireworks, the centre-piece of which, composed of thirty thousand rockets, would cost, so they said, four thousand louis (nearly fifty thousand of our francs).

The dauphine continued her journey. Along the route the towns were given over to merry-making, and the whole country-side was in holiday attire. The ground was covered with a carpet of flowers. Young girls, clothed in white, offered bouquets to Marie-Antoinette. The bells rang at random. On every side arose hearty shouts of "Vive la Dauphine!" "Vive le Dauphin!" The roads were well-nigh blocked by the multitude of spectators: the blinds of the princess's carriage were raised, so that everybody could gaze at his leisure upon her sweet and lovely face, and her

fascinating smile. The young peasants said to one another, "How pretty our dauphine is!" A lady who was in the carriage called her attention to that flattering remark, and the dauphine replied, "Madame, the French look upon me with very indulgent eyes."

Official speeches followed fast, one close upon another. It was a succession of dithyrambs in honor of the young princess. One orator essayed to address her in German. "Monsieur," said she, "from this day forth, I understand no language but French."

At Nancy she paid a visit of pious respect to the tombs of the Lorraine princes, her father's ancestors. At Rheims, she said, thinking of the future ceremony of consecration, "This is a city which I desire not to see again for a very long time."

A few leagues from Compiègne she met the Duc de Choiseul, who welcomed her as a devoted friend of her family. It was the 14th May, 1770. A moment later, in the forest of Compiègne, at the cross-road of the Pont-de-Berne, the king and the dauphin appeared, attended by a large escort. Marie-Antoinette at once left her carriage, and threw herself upon the turf at the feet of Louis XV., who quickly raised her to her feet and kissed her. The dauphin, more bashful than herself, hardly dared to look at her; as the official report had it, "he saluted her on the cheek."

The next day they left Compiègne for Versailles. On their way through St. Denis, Marie-Antoinette expressed a

desire to see her aunt, Madame Louise, novice at the Carmelite convent. She entered the gates with the king at six in the evening on the 15th May. One of the nuns speaks of this visit in a letter now among the manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale: "The king requested me to call the sisters, and introduce them to Madame la Dauphine. She is, reverend mother, a princess of unexceptionable features, figure, and manners; and, what is infinitely better, she is said to be of an eminently pious turn. Her features are majestic, modest, and sweet. The king, Mesdames, and Monseigneur le Dauphin more than all, seem enchanted with her; they vie with one another in pronouncing her incomparable."

Along the whole of the route the crowd was innumerable. The air rang with enthusiastic acclamations. Marie-Antoinette had the tact to attribute all the honor of the ovation to Louis XV. "The French," said she, "never see enough of their king; they cannot treat me with more grateful kindness than by thus demonstrating to me their love for him whom I have already come to look upon as a second father."

The night of the 15th May, Marie-Antoinette lay at the *château* of La Muette, where the king gave her, with other jewels, the celebrated pearl necklace, of unexampled beauty, which was brought to France by Anne of Austria, and by her handed down for the queens and dauphines of France. On the following day she arrived at Versailles. She could not look unmoved upon that celebrated palace, which was

then playing so great a part in France and in Europe, and of which she had heard so much. At ten in the morning she crossed the threshold of the palace and entered the marble court, where she was welcomed by the king and the dauphin.

Photogravure Goupil & Co

Printed by GOUPIL & C° of PARIS for the CLUB OF ODD VOLUMES

VII.

THE MARRIAGE OF MARIE-ANTOINETTE, AND THE FÊTES ATTENDING IT.

WE have seen the dauphine's arrival at the palace of Versailles. It was the 16th May, 1770, and ten o'clock in the morning. But a few moments, and the nuptial benediction will be pronounced upon the young husband and wife. With eager but respectful curiosity all eyes were turned upon the princess, who was in travelling costume. Soon she will reappear in her superb wedding-gown.

Her portrait is thus drawn by Bachaumont: "She is very well shaped, and her figure is finely proportioned throughout. Her hair is light and of a beautiful shade; I should judge that it will some day be a light chestnut. Her forehead is fine; her face is a graceful oval in shape, a little too long; her eyebrows are as full as a blonde can ever boast. Her eyes are blue, but not by any means dull; they sparkle with animation and intelligence. She has an aquiline nose, tapering slightly at the end; her mouth is very small, and her lips are rather thick, especially the lower, which has the peculiar formation characteristic of the 'Austrian lip.' Her complexion is of dazzling whiteness, and her natural coloring enables her to dispense with artificial aids. Her bearing is suitable to an archduchess, but her dignity is

tempered by her gentleness. Gazing upon this princess, it is hard not to avoid a feeling of respect mingled with affection."

At one in the afternoon, the dauphine, in magnificent attire, and followed by an imposing procession, accompanied the dauphin to the chapel. Monseigneur de La Roche-Aymon, Archbishop of Rheims and Grand Chaplain of France, was the officiating clergyman. The bride and groom advanced to the altar, and there knelt down. The chapel, decked with wreaths and flowers, was resplendent with thousands of lights.

The archbishop blessed thirteen pieces of gold and a golden ring, and handed them to the dauphin, who placed the ring on the fourth finger of the dauphine's left hand, after which he gave her the thirteen pieces. After the *Pater*, the canopy was held by the Bishop of Senlis on the prince's side, and by the Bishop of Chartres on that of the princess. The newly wedded, with deep emotion mutually pledged to one another an attachment which even death itself had no power to interrupt.

All Paris had come to Versailles at this time. The people had been arriving on foot since dawn. The *bourgeois* had come too, some upon hired horses, others in cabs or hired carriages. The park was filled to its utmost limit with an enormous multitude.

Alas, gloomy presentiments are fated to recur too soon! At three in the afternoon, the sky became covered with clouds, and a torrent of rain fell. Loud roared the thunder. Every one ran for the nearest shelter; it was a general

sauve-qui-peut. The weather was so inclement that the fireworks had to be abandoned. The illuminations were fairly drowned out by the rain, and the streets and squares of Versailles were like a desert.

But although the approaches to the palace in the evening were unattractive enough, the interior was a blaze of cheerfulness and light. All the magnificence of a wealthy aristocracy, all the resources of luxury and art, were there accumulated. There was a game of lansquenet in the Galerie des Glaces, and a state supper was served in the apartment known as the queen's antechamber.*

On the following day, the 17th May, the new theatre, begun in 1753, after designs of the architect Gabriel, was opened for the first time. (It is the hall where the Senate now holds its sessions.) The play was the opera "Persée," the words by Quinault, the music by Lulli. On the 19th May, a grand full-dress ball took place in this new hall, and was opened by the dauphin and the dauphine.

Madame du Deffand wrote to Horace Walpole on the morning of that day: "There are all sorts of entanglements here; the minuet to be performed by Mademoiselle de Lorraine this evening has caused lots of trouble."

In truth, this affair of the minuet was of vital importance, and the whole court was stirred to its depths. And what was it all about? Louis XV., to flatter the Empress Maria Theresa, had decreed that Mademoiselle de Lorraine, by virtue of her kinship to the dauphine, should dance the

* No. 117 of M. Soulié's Notice du Musée de Versailles.

minuet immediately after the princes and princesses of the royal family. We can see that this tended to establish an intermediate caste between the princes of the blood and the great nobles, in favor of the Lorraine family.

Thereupon arose a tempest of jealousy and wrath. The dukes got together, and convoked an assemblage of the leading nobles at the house of the Bishop of Noyon, brother of the Maréchal de Broglie. There they drew up a grandiloquent memorial to the king, in which they said: —

"Sire, the grandees and nobility of the kingdom lay at the foot of the throne, with perfect confidence, the just alarm which they have felt because of the current rumors that your Majesty has been solicited to accord to the family of Lorraine a rank immediately after the princes of the blood, and that it has been ordered that Mademoiselle de Lorraine should dance before all the ladies of the court, at the full-dress ball to be given in honor of the marriage of Monsieur le Dauphin. They are of opinion, Sire, they would fail in the duty which their birth enjoins upon them if they should not lay before you how greatly such a distinction, as humiliating for them as it is novel, would add to their grief at losing the privilege which has always been theirs, of being separated from your Majesty and the royal family by no intermediate rank.

"The grandeur of the highest dignitaries in every state marks the grandeur of the nation, and the grandeur of the nation is the source of the grandeur of its king. It would be equivalent to casting a doubt upon the pre-eminence of France in Europe to doubt the pre-eminence of those who, in the words of one of your ancestors, 'are a part of its honor and of the honor of its kings.'"

And all this for a minuet! The public at large was

much diverted by the presentation of this request by a bishop. Observing among the signers the names of those whose dignities were of recent manufacture side by side with those of the most ancient origin, the remark was made that the descendants of such and such a one might some day proudly say: "One of our ancestors signed the famous request concerning the minuet at the time of the marriage of Louis XV.'s grandson; and for that reason our name was thenceforth reckoned among those which shed the brightest lustre upon the monarchy."

The request was parodied in these lines: —

"Sire, les grands de vos États
Verront avec beaucoup de peine
Une princesse de Lorraine
Sur eux au bal prendre le pas.
Si Votre Majesté projette
De les flétrir d'un tel affront,
Ils quitteront le cadenette,
Et laisseront là des violons.
Avisez-y, la ligue est faite.
Signé: l'évèque de Noyon,
La Veaupalière, Beaufremont,
Clermont, Laval et de Villette." *

Behold a new Fronde, a veritable insurrection! Louis XV. replied to the request by the following note: —

"The ambassador of the empress-queen and the emperor requested me, on the part of his sovereigns, to confer some dis-

* "Sire, the nobles of your realm will be deeply grieved to see a princess of Lorraine take precedence of them at the ball. If your Majesty proposes to offer them such an insult, they will wash their hands of the whole affair, violins and all. Take notice; the agreement is made. Signed: Bishop of Noyon, La Veaupalière," etc.

tinction upon Mademoiselle de Lorraine, on the present occasion of the marriage of my grandson to the Archduchess Marie-Antoinette. The order of dancing at the ball being the only matter which could not be turned into a precedent, since the choice of dancers depends solely upon my will, without distinction of place, rank, or dignity (excepting always the princes and princesses of my blood, who are not to be compared or placed upon the same level with any other Frenchman); and, moreover, desiring to make no innovation upon the customs in vogue at my court, — I assume that the grandees and nobles of my kingdom, in view of the fidelity, submission, and attachment which they have always shown to me and my predecessors, will never give me occasion to be displeased with them, especially in this matter, in which my only purpose is to show my gratitude to the empress for the gift she has made me, which you and I both hope will secure the happiness of my declining years."

However, in order to enforce obedience, the king was almost compelled to resort to threats. The ball took place at last, and Mademoiselle Lorraine triumphantly walked the minuet which had caused so much heart-burning.

The same evening there was a display of fireworks upon the terrace of the palace. After it was at an end, all the paraphernalia were removed, to make room for an illumination of the park, which reached its climax, at the extremity of the great canal, by a magnificent affair representing the Temple of the Sun. The canal was filled with gayly bedecked boats, and the great fountains sparkled in the many colored light.

Stages for jugglers' performances were erected in the park, and the light-hearted populace danced to their hearts' content in the half-lighted shade of the arbors.

On the 21st of May, there was a *bal masqué* in the king's apartments, and on the 23d a performance of "Athalie" with choral music.

Now it was the turn of the good city of Paris to celebrate the dauphin's nuptials by one of those *fêtes* of bewildering beauty of which she alone has the secret. It was appointed to take place on the 30th May.

The population of Paris was increased by a numberless multitude of foreigners and provincials. The locality selected for the *fête* was the Place Louis XV. Prodigious effects were promised in pyrotechny, to be followed by an illumination of the Boulevards. The Place Louis XV. was connected with the Tuileries by a bridge, which was put in place every morning, and taken up every night. Between, were several sunken gardens.

At eight in the evening crowds of sight-seers overflowed from the Place Louis XV. into Rue Royale and other neighboring streets. Four hundred thousand persons were moving about in the blaze of lanterns and torches. The weather was superb, and the rays of the moon and stars rivalled the illuminations. The equestrian statue of the king was in a blaze of light. The pyrotechnical display took place according to expectation, the principal piece being a representation of the Temple of Hymen. Surrounded by a sort of parapet, at the four corners of which were dolphins vomiting flame from their wide-open jaws, the many colored temple had the statue of Louis XV. for a background. Near the statue, and on the bank of the Seine,

was the platform from which the rockets ascended in brilliant sheaves of fire. Shouts of applause arose on all sides, and the crowd shrieked its delight.

Suddenly a stray rocket fell upon the wooden stand of one of the illuminating lamps, and a brisk conflagration was started. At the same time a procession of sight-seers, returning to the Boulevard by Rue Royale, met a similar column on its way to the Place Louis XV. The two bodies blocked the passage, and the arrival of the firemen added to the confusion, which soon became something beyond description. The moats of the Tuileries and the sunken gardens were so many precipices which swallowed up many victims. The terror was increased a thousandfold by the shrieks of the wounded. There seemed to be none but dead and dying. All was horror and despair in that accursed place, destined to be the scene of so many crimes before the century should close. At the height of the confusion, a carriage coming from the Cours-la-Reine turned into the Champs-Elysées. Within was a youthful figure, whose beautiful face and charming manner adorned her even more than the precious gems which sparkled in her hair and upon her dress. It was the dauphine, paying her first visit to Paris, to see the illuminations of that ill-omened Place Louis XV. "To-day," she said to herself, "there is no storm impending; the sky is clear and serene, and all hearts are beating joyfully." She was overjoyed to see under such favorable auspices the fair and famous city of Paris.

But what is this she hears? Are these shouts of joy, or

shrieks of terror? The carriage stops. The dauphine asks what has happened, and is told that blood is flowing in streams through Place Louis XV., that the number of those killed is not yet known, but is surely large, and that she must abandon the thought of penetrating farther into the cruelly bereaved city.

The carriage returns upon its tracks. Marie-Antoinette, deeply shocked, regains Versailles, while the dead are being taken to the cemetery of the Madeleine, where, some years hence, other victims will be laid by their side.

Thus ended the nuptial *fêtes* of the martyred king and queen. Such was the prologue to the tragedy which will bring tears of compassion to the eyes of generations yet unborn. Such were the first mutterings of the most terrible of tempests.

VIII.

THE DAUPHINE AND THE ROYAL FAMILY IN 1770.

THE depressing effect of the catastrophe in Place Louis XV. was soon effaced. It was not long before people ceased to talk of it, except to praise the sympathetic natures of the young bridal couple, who had devoted their income for a whole year to the relief of the stricken families of the victims. Marie-Antoinette was the object of an admiration which was almost delirious in its enthusiasm. France was literally mad over this fifteen-year-old dauphine, upon whom the whole vocabulary of praise and encomium was exhausted. They compared her to an angel of comfort, to a bright torch of hope, to a morning star. It was lyricism run wild, an endless succession of mythological comparisons with the Vénus de Médicis, the Atalanta at Marly, Flora, goddess of gardens, Hebe, radiant image of youth, and Juno, queen of Olympus.

All France knelt before her. When she made her formal entry into Paris, her carriage was lost to sight beneath a shower of roses. Prostrate before the altar at Notre Dame, the princess seemed a being from another world, the very personification of goodness and purity, of poetry and prayer. As she appeared upon the balcony at the Tuileries, there was a spontaneous outburst of joyous shouts.

"*Mon Dieu*, what a crowd!" she cried.

"Madame," rejoined the Duc de Brissac, "with deference to M. le Dauphin, every man of those who are gazing at you is in love with you."

Human nature certainly has some strange peculiarities. This woman who was so flattered, so charming, and so much the fashion; this woman who turned the head of everybody else, — found her husband quite lacking in the prevailing enthusiasm.

The dauphin was then sixteen. He not only was not in delicate health, but was unusually robust. He loved fresh air and exercise, took delight in manual labor, fenced like a master, and hunted like Nimrod. And yet he was, physically, absolutely cold. The inconceivable dislike of Louis XIII. for the charming Anne of Austria forms the subject of an interesting work by M. Armand Baschet, "Le Roi chez la Reine." The extraordinary coolness of the future Louis XVI. towards his spouse might well be investigated similarly. The elements may be found in a collection which we shall have frequent occasion to cite, a collection of unquestionable authenticity and of great historical value, which throws a searching light upon Marie-Antoinette.*

It was Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, Maria Theresa's ambassador at the Court of Versailles, the model diplomatist, the shrewd and sagacious observer, who sent the empress

* Secret correspondence between Maria Theresa and the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, with the letters of Marie-Antoinette and Maria Theresa; published by MM. d'Arneth and Geffroy. 3 vols. Firmin Didot.

the most concise and accurate reports concerning the dauphine and her young husband. This witness it was whose mission made it his interest to know everything, and who was at liberty to say what he thought, who counted every pulsation of the princess's heart.

The dauphin found his wife much to his liking, upon the condition that they should not be compelled to live as husband and wife. The Comte de Mercy wrote to Maria Theresa, Aug. 20, 1770: "Nature, somewhat backward in the case of M. le Dauphin, is not yet active in him, — probably because his physical strength has been somewhat impaired by his sudden growth. Moreover, there is nothing in his constitution to imply that he will not become healthy and strong, if he uses a little moderation in his over-violent exercises, which may do him much injury. He thinks Madame l'Archiduchesse charming. He is much pleased with her, and shows a desire to oblige and a gentleness in his treatment of her of which he was not believed to be capable. Madame la Dauphine rules him in all small matters without the least demur from him; and so it only needs a little patience, and everything will come out all right. But in this country they are always in a hurry about everything, and the king and Mesdames are continually making remarks which have no effect, except to cause Madame la Dauphine pain and anxiety."

October 20th of the same year, the Comte de Mercy recurred to this delicate subject in another letter. "The king," he wrote, "has found fault with M. le Dauphin for

his continued coolness, and catechized him about it. The young man replied that he thought Madame l'Archiduchesse charming, and loved her dearly, but that he must have some time yet to overcome his bashfulness."

In the month of September, 1770, it was believed that the prince had at last made up his mind. The Comte de Mercy wrote in the letter of the 20th of October, before cited, that the dauphin had promised his wife to go with her to Fontainebleau to pass the night. Much delighted at this promise, the dauphine could not make haste enough to confide it to her aunts and the Comtesse de Narbonne. "Madame Adélaïde," continues the ambassador, "chose to add to the effect of the dauphine's indiscretion by preaching to M. le Dauphin; and he was so put out that he deliberately broke his word to Madame la Dauphine. As I can see plainly that as long as she indulges in such confidences, they will simply result in keeping M. le Dauphin at a distance, and although I hardly knew how to mention such a delicate matter to Madame la Dauphine, I saw that I must do my duty, and I thought I would say to her Royal Highness that she had caused me great anxiety because of the rumors current at Paris that she was on bad terms with M. le Dauphin; that the report had its origin in an alleged breach of his word by M. le Dauphin, after he had promised to pass a certain night in her apartments, — whence it was inferred that there was serious trouble between them. Her Royal Highness seemed somewhat embarrassed at my outspokenness. But, without avoiding the subject, she replied

thus: 'All that you have said to me has only too solid a basis of truth, and proves my imprudence in making Madame de Narbonne my *confidante* in this matter. But how was I to suppose that there could be persons so garrulous and indiscreet as to publish such things?'

"I impressed upon her that everything which concerns the marriage relation is a sacred secret, the violation of which can on no pretext be excused; in fact, that a single indiscretion in that regard might easily destroy forever all confidence between husband and wife, and produce a most injurious effect upon public opinion; that especially was it true in this case, considering the shyness and reserve of M. le Dauphin, for he might remain sundered from her for a long while, if he had reason to fear that what took place between them would be talked about."

The prince was upright, honorable, and worthy of respect; his piety, his charity, his estimable qualities of heart and mind, his love for the people, his humane and Christian sentiments, were passports to the regard of all; but his exterior, it must be confessed, was not attractive. There was a heaviness about his gait, and a lack of decision in his expression; his manners were somewhat rough, his voice was harsh, and his whole action heavy and torpid. One might have said that he was always afraid of being beguiled or deceived. He was continually on the defensive, and embarrassed, notwithstanding his commanding rank, lacking self-confidence, despite the adulation of his flatterers, and being sometimes considered proud from very excess of

shyness. His two brothers were utterly unlike him. The Comte de Provence and the Comte d'Artois were as self-confident as he was bashful and retiring. The former, Louis XVIII. that was to be, was a *bel esprit*, a great admirer of Horace, with apt quotations always at his tongue's end, clever, bright, and politic, remarkable for tact beyond his years, and for skilfully concealed ambition. The latter, the future Charles X., was a young man, a frolicsome child rather, bright, full of life and spirits, already proclaiming that he should love women and horses and pleasure to distraction.

The two sisters of these three brothers, Madame Clotilde (afterwards Queen of Sardinia) and Madame Elisabeth, the martyred saint, were, when Marie-Antoinette arrived in France, two sweet, lovable children, to whom the young dauphine became sincerely attached.

She also displayed a very real attachment for Louis XV., who on his part showed much sympathetic regard for her. When his eyes fell upon the fascinating princess, as admired as she was worthy of admiration, the old king had a feeling of satisfaction like that which Louis XIV. had when he welcomed the Duchesse de Bourgogne to Versailles. The lovely daughter of the German Cæsars brought new life and activity to the vast apartments of the queen, which had been unoccupied since the death of Marie Leczinska. The bedchamber which had been occupied successively by the wife of Louis XIV., the Dauphine de Bavière, the Duchesse de Bourgogne, and the wife of Louis XV., was alloted to her.*

* Salle No. 115 of the "Notice du Musée."

She rose between nine and ten, dressed, and said her prayers, then breakfasted, and went to call upon her aunts, with whom she generally found the king. A little before noon the formal *entrées* took place. The dauphine applied her rouge, and washed her hands before everybody. At noon she attended mass in the chapel, after which she dined in public with the dauphin, in the room called the queen's antechamber.*

"The ushers," says Madame Campan, "allowed all those who were suitably dressed to enter. This spectacle was the everlasting delight of provincial visitors. At the dinner-hour the stairways were thronged with well-dressed people, who, after watching the dauphine eat her soup, went to see the princes eat their boiled meat, and then ran at the top of their speed to be in time to see Mesdames at dessert."

The dinner ended at half after one. The dauphine then went to the apartments of the dauphin, which were below her own; then returned to her room, and did needle-work, read or wrote, or took lessons in literature or upon the harpsichord. A drive in the park and the neighborhood, a visit or two to Mesdames, card-playing from seven to nine, then supper, and at eleven to bed. Such was the daily life of the princess. Her principal associates were her aunts, Mesdames Adélaïde, Victoire, and Sophie, whose ages in 1770 were thirty-eight, thirty-seven, and thirty-six years respectively. All three had remained unmarried. Notwithstanding their unexceptionable morals, they had their failings. Madame Adélaïde liked to have a finger in every pie. She

* No. 117 of the "Notice du Musée."

thought that she had much influence with her father, and the ministers were obliged to reckon with her. Madame Victoire followed in general the directions of her elder sister, although she did not lack an active intellect herself. As for Madame Sophie, hers was an upright, but an indolent nature. "I never saw anybody with such a timid air," says Madame Campan. "She walked very briskly, and in order to recognize the people who moved aside for her, without seeming to look at them, she had adopted the habit of looking out of the corner of her eye, as hares do. She was so terribly bashful that one might see her every day for years without hearing her utter a word. Yet there were times when she would suddenly become most affable and gracious, and communicative too. This occurred in stormy weather: she was so afraid of it that she would then voluntarily approach persons of the least consequence, and ask them a thousand questions most condescendingly. If there came a flash of lightning, she would grasp their hands, and would have embraced them at a thunder-clap."

Madame Louise, the youngest of the daughters of Louis XV., was at the Carmelite convent at St. Denis, and we have seen that the dauphine paid her a visit there even before she arrived at Versailles. The ceremony of taking the veil was performed on the 10th September, 1770, and Marie-Antoinette was present. The Pope's nuncio said mass, and Madame Louise de France, known in the community as Sister Thérèse-Augustine, received the sacrament. Before assuming the sackcloth garment, the princess dressed her-

self for the last time in royal attire, — a robe of cloth of silver, with flowers of gold scattered through it. Resplendent with glistening jewels, a diadem upon her head, and surrounded by the lords and ladies who had once composed her household, she stood forth in a cloud of incense, — an apotheosis one would have said.

The Bishop of Troyes then delivered a discourse of such touching solemnity that, in the words of the Abbé Proyart, who described the ceremony, every listener shed tears, save only the strong-hearted woman for whom they were shed.

The discourse at an end, all the pomp and show vanished. After a momentary absence, the daughter of the king returned, clad in Carmelite costume, and received the veil and mantle of a nun from the hands of the dauphine.

IX.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE AND MADAME DU BARRY.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE, universally courted and admired, seemed to have attained the summit of earthly felicity. On the surface, her future seemed destined to be all that heart could wish. But in the depths of her heart she was already fearful of ill to come. Her husband's inexplicable lack of warmth was not her only cause of chagrin. Young as she was, she began to be aware of the snares and pitfalls of every description with which her path was beset by her ill-wishers. The very embodiment of innocence, sweetness, and frankness, she was forced to dwell in an atmosphere of paltry jealousies, machiavellian plots, and interminable intrigue. She had constantly to submit to a minute and often spiteful scrutiny. All eyes were fastened upon her. Beneath hyperbolical flattery and the warmest praise, was hidden much unkind criticism and a world of jealousy and, incredible as it seems, of hatred. The dauphine was disliked for being young and pretty. All the coquettes who had had their day, all the old maids and ambitious schemers, found it very hard to put up with her superior attractions in the matter of birth and rank, as well as grace and loveliness. Envy was craftily hidden under the

mask of politics. They complained that the dauphine represented the Austrian alliance, which, they said, was directly opposed to all the traditions of French diplomacy. They took it ill of her to be the daughter of a great empress, whose genius had performed such marvels.

The creatures of Madame du Barry were quite obscured by the young couple, to whom the future belonged, and who at the time stood as a sort of mute protest of virtue against vice, of purity against shame. All the Basils of the court — and God knows how many there were of them — were only too eager to begin, very gently and softly, and on the sly, to spread the slanderous accusations, the *crescendo* of which was so terrible.

One of Marie-Antoinette's great crosses was the having everywhere to come in contact with Madame du Barry, that nobody's daughter, who assumed to treat with her upon a footing of equality, and whom Maria Theresa, a little too politic, perhaps, had directed her to conciliate, out of respect for Louis XV., — the woman who was the bitter enemy of the Duc de Choiseul, the mainstay of the Austrian alliance at the Court of Versailles. Her pride revolted at the necessity, as she remembered, with a toss of her shapely aristocratic head, the blood that flowed in her veins, and the fire that shone in her eyes; and the daughter of the Cæsars conceived an intense dislike for the favorite who degraded the throne.

She wrote to Maria Theresa, July 9th, 1770: "The king shows his regard for me in a thousand ways, and I love him dearly; but his weakness for Madame du Barry is pitiable, for

she is the most foolish and impertinent creature you can imagine."

The two were rivals in the field of politics, for one wished to retain Choiseul in the ministry, while the other was bent upon overthrowing him. Two hostile camps were formed, and the excitement was intense; but Madame du Barry's triumph was a foregone conclusion. The Duc de Choiseul, intoxicated by success, and accustomed for so long to triumph over every obstacle, believed himself to be not only necessary to the king, but absolutely indispensable. The powerful minister was quite capable of saying of his enemies what the Duc de Guise said shortly before his fall, "They would not dare." The political chess-board was so complicated that any man who was so well acquainted with the position of all the pieces as he, might well think that Louis XV. would not have the courage to dismiss him.

The Baron de Gleichen, one of Choiseul's strongest friends, considered him imprudent to the point of folly. "It would have been very easy," says the baron, in his interesting "Souvenirs," "to patch up a peace with Madame du Barry, who would have asked nothing better than to be delivered from the rapacious and tyrannical claws of her brother and his patrons, and all the *roués* whose tool she was. She was a good soul, too, sorry to be employed in doing harm, and her joyous temperament would have been delighted with M. de Choiseul as soon as she really knew him. The king would certainly have attempted the impossible to bring about and

cement an alliance between his favorite and his minister, whom he was very sorry to part with. Nothing could prove this more convincingly than a letter which he wrote him towards the last, when they wrote to each other much oftener than they met. M. de Choiseul having complained of a formidable cabal, whose machinations he feared, the king replied: —

'Your imagination is all astray; you have been deceived. Be on your guard against those who surround you, who are no friends of mine. You do not know Madame du Barry; all France would be at her feet if . . . [Signed] LOUIS.'

"Did not this letter, which I myself saw, express a desire for an accommodation between the two, and beg him to do his part? And did it not contain the avowal, most singular for a king to make, that the single voice of his minister would have more effect than the whole power of royalty?"*

The following reflection of M. de Gleichen is in accord with the taste and style of the eighteenth century: "It is very surprising that a man with M. de Choiseul's common-sense should have been obdurate in the face of such kindness, and should have declined the opportunity of turning the tables upon all his enemies, and of making sure of the stability of his power, with the assistance of a woman who would have been entirely at his orders."

The Duc de Choiseul had been the favorite of Madame de Pompadour; therefore it could not have been from moral

* Souvenirs du Baron de Gleichen, preceded by a notice by M. Paul Grimblot. 1 vol. Téchener.

scruples that he refused to make his peace with Madame du Barry, for so far as public scandal was concerned, the two mistresses were on a par; and in the matter of disposition, the comtesse had much the advantage of the marquise.

But the great lord, more vain of his person than his place; the daring statesman, more influential and more courted than his master, and who said to his friends, "Do not rely upon the king, you will get nothing by that;" the haughty duke and peer who remembered that in former days a man of his high rank would have thought that he bemeaned himself by accepting the place of Secretary of State, and who considered that he did much honor to Louis XV. in consenting to make one of his ministry, — Choiseul, infatuated with his triumphs, was no longer the clever courtier of Madame de Pompadour's time.

The idea of bending the knee to a low-born sultana revolted the pride of this grand vizier who had no fear of the halter. As M. Jobez has well said, in his "La France sous Louis XV.," "He was one of those men of pleasure who dip into politics as an avocation which interests their imagination and tickles their vanity." He had no thought of subjecting himself to aught which shocked his sense of propriety or offended his taste. Madame du Barry was offensive to him, and he defied her. The bare idea that the minister who had concluded the "family pact," and had annexed Corsica to France; who had dared to enter the lists against the most powerful of modern societies, the Jesuits; who was the idol of nobility, parliaments, and *philosophes;* whose glory

was borne on every breeze that blew, by the blaring of all the trumpets of Renown, and who had succeeded in making himself feared and admired by all Europe, — the bare idea that he, the Duc de Choiseul, could be sacrificed to a creature of the Du Barry stamp, seemed to him the height of improbability and absurdity.

Nevertheless, that was just what happened. Let us hasten to say, however, that the hostility of the comtesse was not the sole cause of the minister's fall. Although he was supported by the dauphine, the dauphin was hostile to him, because he had said, some years before, to that prince's father: "Monseigneur, I may perhaps some day have the misfortune of being your subject; but I shall never have that of being your servant."

Religious people blamed him for the expulsion of the Jesuits, and for the friendship of Voltaire. Conservatives accused him of a weakness for the parliaments. Partisans of peace at any price considered his foreign policy irritating, and likely to cause trouble. They charged him with being upon the point of doing what Louvois had done under Louis XIV., — of setting Europe in a blaze to prove that the War Department was in skilful hands.

Louis XV., whose timidity increased as he advanced in years, was alarmed, perhaps with good reason. The alliance of the Northern courts already existed in the germ. England's attitude was threatening, and a conflict between English and Spaniards had just broken out in the Falkland Islands. Louis XV. was led to believe that a coalition was

imminent, and a repetition of the Seven Years' War, which would be due, they said, entirely to the imprudence and inconsequence of Choiseul. The enemies of the minister then notified Madame du Barry that the moment had come to bring matters to a crisis. Dealers in anecdotes told of her playing with oranges, and crying as she tossed them about, laughing uproariously, "Trump, Choiseul! Trump, Praslin!" It was also said that after telling Louis that she had dismissed her cook, she said to her royal adorer: "I have got rid of my Choiseul: when will you do as much by yours?"

On the 24th December, 1770, the minister received a letter from the king in these words: —

> MY COUSIN, — My dissatisfaction with your services compels me to send you into exile at Chanteloup, whither you will betake yourself within twenty-four hours. I should have sent you much farther away, except for my special esteem for Madame la Duchesse de Choiseul, in whose well-being I am much interested. Be careful that your conduct does not compel me to take more severe measures. With this, I pray God, my Cousin, to have you in his holy keeping.
>
> [Signed] LOUIS.

Then was seen a phenomenon, which, as M. Henri Martin has said, was probably never seen before, — the court faithful to one who was in disgrace. During the few hours which the Duc and Duchesse de Choiseul passed at Paris, before setting out for Chanteloup, an enormous number of great lords and ladies, magistrates, military men, *bourgeois*, and men of letters wrote their names upon the register at

their mansion. The young Duc de Chartres, afterwards so well known under the name of Philippe Égalité, forced his way by the sentry, to cast himself into the arms of the exiled minister!* The most exalted personages sought the king's permission to pay a visit at Chanteloup.

Was it that human nature had changed for the better, and had become more generous than at other epochs? By no manner of means. It was because opposition was fashionable at the moment. Moreover, it was the general opinion that Choiseul would return to power.

The Comte de Ségur says, in his "Mémoires:" "The king remained almost alone in his mistress's boudoir. A column which was set up at Chanteloup, on which the names of the numerous visitors were inscribed, served as a monument to this new Fronde. The impressions of the young are apt to be very vivid, and I shall never forget my delight when I saw my father's name and my own carved upon that column of opposition, — a forerunner of other acts of resistance, which assumed such grave importance in the sequel. From one end of the kingdom to the other, opposition became a point of honor: it seemed a clear duty to high-minded persons, a virtuous act to men of generous impulse, to the *philosophes* a useful weapon to employ in reasserting the freedom of mankind, — in short, it was a method of making a sensation, and became, so to speak, a fashion which was largely adopted by the young generation. The parliaments made remonstrances,

* See the interesting work of M. Grasset: "Madame de Choiseul et son temps." 1 vol. Didier.

the priests preached sermons, the *philosophes* wrote books, and the young courtiers turned out epigrams. Every one, feeling that the helm was in unskilled hands, defied a government which no longer inspired confidence or respect."

Madame du Barry, whose character was but poorly adapted for political strife, was amazed at her own triumph. But Marie-Antoinette had not witnessed the fall of the devoted friend of the house of Austria without a feeling of bitter indignation. Maria Theresa, alarmed at the occurrence, desired that her daughter should conciliate the omnipotent favorite; but the repugnance which she aroused in the dauphine was greater every day. On the 2d Sept. 1771, the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau wrote to the empress:

"Your Majesty will have deigned to notice, in my first, very humble report, that M. le Dauphin had approved my suggestions as to the advisability of Madame la Dauphine not treating the Comtesse du Barry with too much severity. This point seems to me more essential than ever, because it is the source of all the trouble, and of all the deplorable steps which the king may allow himself to be drawn into to signify his displeasure with his children. The opportunities which I have had of meeting the favorite have put me in a way to know her. She seems to have little mind, and to be very frivolous and vain, with no symptoms of a designing or vindictive disposition. It is very easy to draw her into conversation, and very often much information may be gained from her, she is so heedless in what she says. I am assured that if Madame la Dauphine could only bring herself to speak to her once, it would then be very easy for me to stop all pretension to anything beyond that, and to put an end to a thousand embarrassments, which spring from the strange condition of things, in the interior of this court."

Maria Theresa fully agreed with her ambassador. She wrote Marie-Antoinette a letter on the 30th September, 1771, in which she urged her to treat Madame du Barry as she would any lady who was admitted to the court and to the society of the king. Declaring that the dauphine, as her sovereign's first subject, owed obedience and submission to Louis XV., she added: "You should set the example to the court and courtiers, so that your master's will may be executed. If base actions or familiarity were demanded of you, neither myself nor anybody else could advise you to yield; but an indifferent word and a look or two, not for the woman, but for your grandfather, your master, your benefactor!"

Maria Theresa's words to the contrary notwithstanding, it was much to be deplored that a grandfather should choose to inflict such companionship upon his grandson's wife.

The legitimate and worthy pride of Marie-Antoinette suffered sadly. "The Comtesse du Barry's ascendency over the king's mind is now entirely without limit," wrote the Comte de Mercy, December 19, 1771; "it is unmistakably evident in all that concerns the royal family; and the more the favorite is mortified by uncivil treatment, the harder she tries to take advantage of every opportunity to show her resentment."

The Comte de Mercy, who, according to the instructions of the empress, was untiring in his endeavors to induce the dauphine to be civil to the favorite, at last succeeded in his suit to a certain extent. He relates it with much satisfaction in a letter of the 14th August, 1772. He says that,

Madame du Barry having arrived, after the king's mass, with the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, "Madame la Dauphine spoke to the last-named; then, turning to the favorite, she made a few remarks about the weather and the hunting, so that although she did not directly address the Comtesse du Barry, she was at liberty to believe that the words were addressed to her as well as to the Duchesse d'Aiguillon. Nothing more was necessary to content the favorite. The king, upon being informed of what had taken place, seemed much pleased thereat, and signified his gratification to Madame la Dauphine by various little attentions that evening during the state supper."

Marie-Antoinette, however, despite her desire to do as her mother urged, could not overcome the repugnance inspired by the woman whose favor was such a scandal and disgrace. In a letter which she wrote her mother on the 21st January, 1772, the dauphine could not hide her heartfelt dread of certain possible exigencies. "Madame, my dearest mother," said she, "you can well believe that I always sacrifice my prejudices and my dislike so long as nothing disreputable or dishonorable is proposed. It would be the sorrow of my life if anything should happen to make trouble between my two families; my heart would be always on the side of my own, and my duties here would be very hard to fulfil. I shudder at the thought."

The noble frankness of Marie-Antoinette touched Maria Theresa to the quick. The empress, accustomed, whether as mother or sovereign, to undisputed domination, answered

her daughter's letter on the 13th February: "You have made me laugh, with your fancy that either I or my minister could ever advise you to do anything dishonorable, or even in the least degree improper. See from this how strong a hold prejudice and bad advice have taken upon your mind! Your agitation makes me tremble for you. What interest can I have other than your good and that of your country, the dauphin's happiness and your own, and the critical situation of yourself and the whole kingdom and royal family, surrounded by intrigue and faction? Who can give you better advice than my minister, who knows the whole nation through and through, and the influences which are at work there? You must follow his advice upon every subject without exception, and you must, by a measured and logical course of action, prepare yourself for anything that may happen."

Maria Theresa's persistence in this direction was due to her knowledge that all the powers hostile to Austria were at that very moment redoubling their efforts to conciliate the favorite, and to break off the alliance between the courts of Versailles and Vienna. "We know beyond question," she wrote to her ambassador, "that England and the King of Prussia are trying to win over the Barry: you ought to know better than I if it is so. The king is constant in his friendships, and I venture to appeal to his heart; but he is weak, and those who surround him will not give him time to reflect. If France allows herself to be wheedled by Prussia, who will inevitably betray her, then I ought to say to you

that it is the only circumstance which would make it absolutely necessary for me to change my policy; to my great regret, it is true, but it would be unavoidable. To avoid these evil and vexatious consequences for my monarchy and my family, we must use every possible means; and there is nobody but my daughter, assisted by your advice and your knowledge of the surroundings, who is in a position to render this service to her family and her fatherland. Before everything, she must, by assiduous and affectionate advances, win the king's good graces; she must try to divine his thoughts, so as to run counter to him in nothing; and she must treat the favorite well. I do not ask my daughter to bemean herself, still less to become intimate with the favorite, but by such attentions as would be a fitting mark of her consideration for her grandfather and master, to gain any advantage which may accrue therefrom to us and to both courts: perhaps the continuance of the alliance depends upon it."

Oh, the paltriness of human grandeur! A woman endowed with brain and heart and genius, a Maria Theresa, allowing the friendship of the mightiest empires of the world, the maintenance of the general equilibrium, and the destiny of Europe, to depend upon the fiat of a Du Barry! Poor Marie-Antoinette, more to be pitied than envied; for all the splendor of her loveliness, for all her prestige, she became what she was to be to the day of her death,—the victim of politics.

X.

THE DAUPHINE AND MARIA THERESA.

THERE is not to be found in all history a more interesting series of letters than those which passed between the Empress Maria Theresa and her ambassador at Versailles, the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau. Never has the character of a sovereign, and the tact and talent of a diplomat, been more strikingly revealed.

In her letters Maria Theresa appeared just what she really was, — a clever politician, accustomed to power and domination; a brainy woman, whom nothing escaped, and who managed everything; a mother who inspired veneration and awe in her children; a sovereign who busied herself about the concerns of her family and her empire with equal solicitude and equal authority. Her advice was equivalent to a command, her language that of one who meant to be obeyed. Although her daughter had become French, she continued to look upon her as a German princess, and it was her desire to make her a sort of Austrian ambassadress, accredited to Louis XV., but under the orders of the Comte de Mercy. The empress was surprised to find that a young girl of fifteen had not the experience and the mature power of insight of a woman of middle age, and she did not recog-

nize Marie-Antoinette's right to be anything less than perfect in every respect. In her eyes, the dauphine was still the little scholar of Schönbrunn and the Burg.

Maria Theresa, like most rulers, had a passionate desire to be well posted on every subject. The most trivial details were interesting to her. She desired to be kept informed as to all the minutiæ of her daughter's physical and moral status. Nothing escaped her observation, and she thought of everything; dress, reading, conversation, dancing, driving, everything came under her incessant and rigid scrutiny. She might have been actually living at the palace of Versailles, and have been less familiar with all its details than she was. She did live there in spirit; and she knew all its secrets, and all the snares laid for the unwary. Over and over again she said to her daughter, "Take care!" As well instructed in the peculiarities of the French character as if she had lived in France all her life, she was no stranger to the frivolity, the wickedness, the ingratitude, and the cowardice of mankind, and knew what depths of baseness and envy exist in the make-up of many courtiers. The glamour of the Capitol did not make her forget the Tarpeian Rock; and at certain times her words were so sad, and her thoughts of the future so anxious, that it would seem as if she had foreseen the destiny of her Antoinette, and had caught a glimpse of the scaffold looming in the distance.

The empress's correspondent, too, was a model for diplomatists. Supple, energetic, reserved; very clever in putting himself upon good terms with those who might be useful

to his mission; *persona grata* to Louis XV. and the royal family, to the Duc de Choiseul and the Duc d'Aiguillon, to the devout churchmen and the Comtesse du Barry; a keen observer of the first rank, and an untiring worker; exact even in trifles, cautious to an extreme point, skilful in manœuvring all the pieces in the most involved game of politics, — the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau was heart and soul in his profession.

When he prepared his "very humble reports" for his sovereign, he expended an excessive amount of care and earnestness upon them. If he was fortunate enough to receive the congratulations of "her sacred majesty," as he always called the empress, his joy knew no bounds. His letters to Maria Theresa, written independently of his official despatches, form a complete journal of the dauphine's existence. Everything is there set down at its proper day and hour. The ambassador knows everything which takes place in the princess's *salon*, and knows also what does not take place in her alcove. A lady's maid, a physician, — what shall I say? — a father confessor, could have no more accurate information.

The dauphine was still a mere child. Sweet, innocent, and ingenuous, ignorant of evil; making a little fun of etiquette; sincerely religious, but always charming in her piety; sighing for Vienna, but loving Versailles; German in memory, but French at heart; overflowing with respect and affection for her august mother, but finding her words at times a little harsh, — the fascinating princess, thanks to the

inexplicable coldness of the husband, was a maid still, though a wife.

Suppose she had a venial fault or two; suppose that from time to time she was guilty of some trifling acts of imprudence, which she was to expiate so cruelly some day, — they were at most the faults and follies which had the excuse of youth, and its charm as well. Marie-Antoinette had spirits suited to her age; she had also its animation and sprightliness and thoughtlessness; and it was those very qualities which gave to her features a sympathetic and feminine charm.

The lovely dauphine, who called Louis XV. "Papa," and leaped upon his neck without asking leave; who, like the child that she was, took especial delight in the companionship of children; and who, when her maid of honor, the strict and pin-sticking Comtesse de Noailles, appeared, would say, with a laugh, "We must be on our good behavior now, here comes Madame Etiquette," — this lovely and unaffected princess was as different from her surroundings as spring is different from winter. She was like young trees, filled with sap, which spring up in the free air of the open fields, and not like the sickly shrubbery in the park at Versailles, which has to grow by rule and square. Her simple manners were her brightest ornament, and her long fair hair her richest diadem; nor could any of her jewels be compared to the brilliancy of her eyes.

And yet this same princess, whose innocence and loveliness ought to have touched every heart, was already

surrounded by enemies, incredible as it seems. Mercy-Argenteau wrote, on the 16th April, 1771:—

"It would be well nigh impossible for your Majesty to form any conceptions of the horrible confusion which prevails here in every direction. The throne is degraded by the rapid growth of the favorite's influence, and by the villainy of her adherents. The nation is alive with seditious utterances and indecent publications, in which the monarch's person is not spared. I have not hesitated to present the picture to Madame la Dauphine, and to impress upon her strongly that the only possible way to avoid embarrassment at so critical a period is to maintain a profound silence as to persons and affairs alike; and her Royal Highness is beginning to realize the necessity of adopting that course of action."

The young girl, with her open and expansive disposition, was expected to bear herself like an old diplomat. She must carefully weigh and calculate the effect of her every movement, her every word, and even of her silence. Everything was remarked, everything commented upon and criticised. The court, for all its majestic exterior, was a perfect ant-hill of petty passions and petty intrigues. Nothing but mines and countermines, traps, coalitions, and cabals. There was Madame du Barry's camp, which was also that of the ministers; the camp of Madame Adélaïde and her sisters; the camp of the friends of the Duc de Choiseul; and the camp of the Comte de Provence, who, though a mere boy, was already a skilful politician.

The partisans of Madame du Barry, who dreaded the future ascendency of the dauphine, fed upon the hope, not

only that she would never be a mother, but that her husband would continue to be as shy and timid as at first. There were people who went so far as to hint at a possible rupture of the marriage. The dauphine's movements were watched in the most annoying way. Her letters were read, and pages were torn from her writing-books, with the evident purpose of imitating her handwriting. She was terribly troubled to find that there were duplicate keys to her furniture, and she was forced to hide her mother's letters under her pillow, in order to preserve them.

This extraordinary state of affairs engrossed much of Maria Theresa's thought. She was particularly bitter against "Mesdames." * Though she recognized their good qualities and their unassailable virtue, she was jealous of them, and criticised them constantly. She would not allow that these princesses had any right to give their niece the least advice.

"I confess," she wrote to the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, February 11, 1771, "that my daughter's situation makes me very uneasy, in view of the stormy condition of affairs at the French court. Her indifference, her disinclination for serious application, her want of tact (which is due to her youth and light-heartedness), her intimacy with her aunts, especially Madame Adélaïde, who is the most scheming and expansive of the sisters, give me more than one reason for alarm."

Maria Theresa, who was German to her finger-ends, and who, although she was anxious for the French alliance,

* The king's daughters.

had no liking for the French nation, was in a measure jealous of the former archduchess's affection for her new country. "There is much cause for wonder," she wrote her, "in the very slight interest you exhibit in the Germans. Believe me, France will esteem you more, and place more reliance upon you, if you show that you possess the German steadfastness and frankness. Do not be ashamed that you are a German, even when it makes you appear awkward."

We can understand that a dauphine of France would require a large store of filial respect not to be somewhat annoyed at this too Germanic advice. The empress was more nearly on the right track when she wrote to her daughter on the 9th July, 1771, in very sensible though severe language: "I look in vain every month for the list of the books you have read, and your other occupations. At your age, one must expect many foolish and puerile notions; but at last they will bore everybody else as well as yourself, and you will be much the worse therefor. I cannot conceal from you that it is already beginning to be talked about, and you will lose in that way the excellent opinion which people have formed of you, — a most essential point for us who are actors on the world's stage. A life of continual dissipation, without the least pretence of serious occupation, will ever tend to deaden your conscience."

At times the mother's exhortations to her daughter became veritable reprimands, and her pen was like a rod of chastisement. Take, for instance, the letter of the 30th

September of the same year (1771), wherein, complaining especially that the dauphine is not sufficiently civil to Madame du Barry, the imperious sovereign cries in a passion: "And so you fail your benefactor on the very first occasion on which you might oblige him! And for what reason, pray? From a disgraceful subservience to people who have conquered you by treating you like a child, and getting up horse-races for you, upon donkeys, with children and dogs! Such are the weighty reasons which draw you to them rather than to your master, and which will make you ridiculous in the long run, and destroy all love and esteem for you. And you began so well! Your face, and your judgment, when not prejudiced by others, are always to be depended upon. I demand that you convince the king of your respect and affection by your every act, and by divining at every opportunity what will please him, even though you should thereby embroil yourself with all the others; for you have but one end to keep in view, — to please the king, and do what he wishes."

Marie-Antoinette, accustomed to respect her mother as much as God himself, always bowed to the authority which admitted no rejoinder. She sometimes happened to forget certain injunctions, but she was surely excusable in that. As the Comte de Mercy wrote the empress, in a letter of the 16th June, 1772, "The deplorable tone of her associates, and being accustomed to receive neither reprimand nor contradiction, not even advice, from the king or M. le Dauphin, added to the distance of three hundred leagues which sepa-

rates her from you, are doubtless the reasons why your stern letters have not always produced the desired effect."

But Maria Theresa melted sometimes. From reprimands she often passed to loving words. Her maternal pride is expressed now and then in accents worthy of Madame de Sévigné. On the 31st October, 1771, she wrote to her daughter: "You have something so moving about you that it is very hard to refuse you; it is a gift from God, to whom you must give your thanks for it, while you make use of it for his glory and the welfare of your fellow-creatures."

It was because she wished her to be perfect, physically and morally, that she said to her, in a letter of the 31st December, 1772: "What! At twelve and thirteen years, Antoinette could receive her friends very prettily, and greet each one with a courteous and graceful word. That this is true, all Vienna, the Empire, Lorraine and France know, because they saw it. And now the dauphine is embarrassed to receive a mere private person! Do not get in the habit of making such frivolous excuses as embarrassment, fear, shyness, and caprice. It is a very bad habit to yield without thought or reflection to such suggestions. You know that your affability won everybody's heart, and you see the opposite every day. Can you make up your mind to neglect this important matter? I bring my sermons to an end with the old year; you do me great injustice if you do not take them as the surest proof of my affection and my interest in your future welfare, which is an absorbing subject of my thoughts."

Marie-Antoinette, who was goodness and sensibility personified, bore her mother no ill-will for her sometimes roughly worded advice, and her filial devotion was never in abeyance. In a letter of the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau (29th February, 1772), we may read of the grief of the lovely dauphine upon learning of her mother's illness. "At the first word, Madame la Dauphine seemed so alarmed that she could hardly comprehend. She returned to her cabinet weeping bitterly, and could say nothing, except that she was unable to give audience. She asked for a rosary which your Majesty sent her, and began to pray. M. le Dauphin, who remained by her side, seemed to sympathize very sincerely with the sorrow of his august spouse."

Maria Theresa complained sometimes that her daughter's letters were not long enough. She did not fully realize all the obstacles there were to the princess's writing her in peace. M. de Mercy-Argenteau said that Marie-Antoinette always wrote in a hurry, in mortal dread of being caught in the act by her husband or her aunts, to whom she never showed her letters to her mother. Her correspondence was certainly not a masterpiece of style. But, after all, could a young German girl be expected to write French like an academician? Marie-Antoinette's letters have, at all events, the merit of being simple, unaffected, albeit without literary pretension, and of proving that she was endowed with a kind heart, a pure conscience, and a frank and open disposition.

If instead of studying history only on the surface, we

dig deeper, we are often surprised to find how little difference there really is between a sovereign and a private individual. The great Maria Theresa, the illustrious empress, notwithstanding the prestige of her lofty rank, inevitably reminds us of the worthy mothers of the middle class, who are forever saying to their daughters, "Be sure and do what is right." Palace, hovel, garret, under all your roofs, the same joys and sorrows abide, the same passions and the same disappointments.

To sum up, Maria Theresa's strictures upon her daughter amount to nothing serious, and at any other time the dauphine would have received nothing but commendation. But men's minds were then inclined to be critical on all subjects, and the first breath of the Revolution was blowing upon the society of France.

However, the fascinating and incomparable dauphine was still the idol of court and nation. What grace, what brilliancy, what attractive qualities! And so young, too, and yet she eclipsed all other women! What a contrast between her and her two sisters-in-law, the Comtesse de Provence and the Comtesse d'Artois! Everywhere and always Marie-Antoinette stands first, — first in grace, and first in loveliness. It seemed as if she were already seated on the throne. When the chorus, at the beginning of the second act of Gluck's "Iphigénie," cried, "Chantons, célébrons notre reine" [Let us sing the praises of our queen], the audience turned towards the dauphine, and saluted her with great enthusiasm, as if her reign had already begun.

How her vivacity and her sweet smile lighted up the great palace at Versailles, which was so gloomy and forbidding without her! What life and animation characterized the select balls which she gave on Mondays in her apartments! There, people danced for love of dancing, without ceremony, and untrammelled by etiquette. The ladies wore white dominos, and the gentlemen their ordinary garments. There shone one of the most poetic and sympathetic souls of the age, the Princesse de Lamballe, a young widow of twenty years, who was to be the truest and most faithful friend of Marie-Antoinette, — the Princesse de Lamballe, who devoted herself with such affectionate care to her father-in-law, the venerable Duc de Penthièvre, of whom Florian said, in addressing to him the dedication of a Biblical poem, * —

> " Pieux comme Booz, austère avec douceur,
> Vous aimez les humains et craignez le Séigneur.
> Hélas! un seul soutien manque à votre famille :
> Vous n'épousez pas Ruth, mais vous l'avez pour fille." †

It was at these Monday balls, where none but the inner circle of the nobility could gain admittance, that those young persons made their first appearance in society who were to become leaders and arbiters of fashion, — those great lords

* See the interesting work of M. de Lescure, La Princesse de Lamballe. 1 vol. Plon.

† " Pious as Boaz, mingling gentleness with austerity, you love your fellow-men and fear the Lord. Alas! but one source of strength is lacking to your family : you did not marry Ruth, although you have her for a daughter."

with liberal principles, types of the new France, and who bore the historic names of Lafayette, Lauzun, La Marck, Ségur, Dillon, Noailles, and Lameth.

But these Monday functions were not enough; other balls were given on Wednesdays in the apartments of the Comtesse de Noailles, Marie-Antoinette's maid of honor. The dauphine went to the first of these, leaning on the arm of her husband, who said to the comtesse as they entered the room, "I trust, Madame, that you will not object to receive a husband and wife who come to share your enjoyment, not to cast a damper upon the party." *

The dauphin and the Comte de Provence were a little awkward in their dancing; but their shortcomings were more than made up by the Comte d'Artois, that *beau idéal* of society men, who was an accomplished dancer. And as for Marie-Antoinette, as graceful as she was fair to look upon, and as quick of movement as she was fascinating, she had the bearing of a goddess.

"Et vera incessu patuit dea."

Her only failing was her inclination to make sport of everything. Like the Comte de la Marck, she was merciless in ridiculing every one who was ugly or dull. She loved youth, and she chose that every one should be light-hearted and should drive dull care far away. Ah, how lovely she was in the winters of 1771 and 1772, when she and the Princesse de

* Letter from the Comte de Mercy to Maria Theresa, 25th February, 1771.

Lamballe passed so much time in her favorite sport, — those sledge races upon the ice, which were like a dream of the poetic North! And how majestic and grand she was on the 8th June, 1773, the day of her solemn entry into Paris, when she visited in royal state the cathedral of Notre Dame, the church of St. Geneviève, and the palace of the Tuileries in a state carriage glittering with gold, drawn by eight horses, and followed by five equipages only less magnificent than her own.

The heavens re-echoed the enthusiastic shouts; all hats were in the air, all hearts in an ecstasy of joy, and all hands joined in tumultuous applause. Cries of "Vive la dauphine" issued from every throat. At every step the smiling and radiant princess might hear such exclamations as "How pretty she is! How lovely she is! What a sweet expression she has!" From every balcony and every window, flowers fell like rain. The feeling manifested was something more than joy or admiration, it was downright intoxication, a very delirium of happiness. Touched to the depths of her soul, and forgetful for the moment of her melancholy and gloomy presentiments, Marie-Antoinette, always affectionate and easily moved, wrote in happy mood to her mother to tell her of the unparalleled *fête*, the memory of which was always so sweet to her.

"Upon returning from our drive," she wrote in a letter of the 14th June, "we had seats upon an open terrace [at the Tuileries], and remained there about half an hour. I cannot tell you, dearest Mamma, of the enthusiastic evidences of

affection which we received at that time. Before withdrawing, we waved our hands to the populace, to their great delight. How fortunate we are to be able to win the love of a whole nation for the little we have done! There can be nothing else so precious as that. I feel it deeply, and I shall never forget it. Another point which gave great satisfaction on that day of days was the bearing and behavior of M. le Dauphin. He replied with marvellous aptness to all the speeches, was quick to take note of everything that was done for him, and especially of the striking earnestness and happiness of the people, whom he treated with the greatest affability. To-morrow we go to the Opéra at Paris; as there is a very great desire that we should also go to the Comédie Française and the Comédie Italienne on two other days, I think that we shall probably do so. I appreciate more fully every day all that my dear mamma has done for my welfare. I was the youngest of all, and she has treated me as if I were her first-born; and my heart is filled to overflowing with most loving gratitude."

At this time Marie-Antoinette seemed truly happy. There were, however, two circumstances which always cast a shadow upon her life, — the continued coolness of her husband, and the scandal caused by the shameful ascendency of Madame du Barry. But what could she do? As Maria Theresa wrote to the Comte de Mercy, "Van Swieten [an old physician of Vienna] is of the opinion that if a young woman so attractive as the dauphine does not arouse the dauphin's affection, there is nothing to be done; it is much

better to make up our minds to wait patiently until time brings about a change in his conduct."

With regard to Madame du Barry, there was no course but to submit to the inevitable. Her favor, incomprehensible as it was, was destined to last out the life of Louis XV.

XI.

THE PAVILION OF LUCIENNES.

MADAME DU BARRY was enthroned like a legitimate queen. She had at last, when the whim seized her, succeeded in assuming the manners and speech of the *grandes dames*. Choosing her intimate associates among women of the highest rank, a Maréchale de Luxembourg, a Duchesse d'Aiguillon, and a Maréchale de Mirepoix, she received in her *salons* dukes and peers, ministers and ambassadors. When Gustavus III., king of Sweden, visited the French court in 1771, he bestowed a very costly necklace upon the favorite's little dog.

Madame du Barry's policy — assuming that a woman of her stamp can have a policy — was more dictatorial and more conservative than that of Madame de Pompadour. Madame du Barry did not lean upon the philosophical faction, and while she kept Louis constantly stirred up concerning the danger to be feared from the Parliament, she as constantly kept before him the example of those princes who, like Charles I., had weakly allowed blows to be aimed at their royal prerogatives. She had purchased, for twenty-four thousand livres at Baron de Thiers' sale, a portrait of the unfortunate monarch by Van Dyck, and it was said that she remarked one day to

Louis, pointing to that picture: "France, do you see that? If you allow your Parliament to go on, it will cut off your head, as the English Parliament did with Charles I."

The thought of danger restored the old king to the vigor which insured his tranquillity for the remainder of his life. Parliament, as the result of its disputes with the Duc d'Aiguillon, had assumed a very factious attitude. It had followed up a declaration that "its members, to their great sorrow, were not left with sufficient liberty of thought to decide questions involving the property, the lives, and the honor of the king's subjects," by refusing to fulfil its judicial functions. Louis XV. crushed this revolutionary movement in the bud. During the night of the 17th January, 1771, all the members of Parliament were arrested at their homes, and required to answer yes or no a royal command to resume their duties. Every one refused. They were thereupon declared to have forfeited their positions, and were sent into exile.

A new Parliament, called the "Parliament Maupeou," from the name of the Chancellor who had advised the *coup d'état*, took the place of the old, and showed itself to be an entirely docile body. As M. Théophile Lavallée has remarked, "the parts of the governmental machine were so worm-eaten that at the least touch of the finger of one of Madame du Barry's courtiers it all crumbled away to dust."

In the persons of the magistrates, the people could see nought but privileged officials who had been cast into utter

discredit by the cases of Lalli, Calas, and La Barre. Maupeou announced that justice would be administered without charge, that offices would cease to be hereditary, and that a new code of procedure, civil and criminal, would be prepared. Voltaire, always on the winning side, went into ecstasies over the glory to be ascribed to the Chancellor, the author of this master-stroke, and commemorated it in a bit of hyperbolical versifying: —

"Oui, que Maupeou, tout seul, du dédale des lois,
Ait pu retirer la couronne,
Qu'il l'ait seul rapportée, aux palais de nos rois,
Voilà ce que j'ai vu, voilà ce que m'étonne.
J'avoue avec l'antiquité
Que ses héros sont admirables;
Mais, pas malheur, ce sont des fables:
Et c'est ici la vérité." *

Madame de Pompadour had overthrown the Jesuits: the Jansenists were maltreated by Madame du Barry. From the depths of his retreat at Ferney, Voltaire fawned upon the favorite with that refinement of adulation of which he had the monopoly. On the 20th June, 1773, he wrote her the following letter: —

"M. de Laborde has told me that you commanded him to kiss me on both cheeks for you.

* "Yes, Maupeou, quite unaided, has succeeded in rescuing the crown from the mazes of the law, and in bringing it back to the palace of our kings: I have myself witnessed the exploit, and I marvelled at it. I agree that the deeds of the heroes of antiquity were admirable, but unfortunately they were fabulous; whereas this is truth."

"Quoi! deux baisers sur le fin de ma vie!
Quel passeport vous daignez m'envoyer!
Deux! c'est trop d'un, adorable Egérie,
Je serais mort de plaisir au premier. *

He has shown me your portrait: do not be angry Madame, if I took the liberty of returning the two kisses to it.

"Vous ne pouvez empêcher cet hommage,
Faible tribut de quiconque a des yeux.
C'est aux mortels d'adorer votre image,
L'original était fait pour les dieux. †

"I have heard several portions of M. de Laborde's 'Pandore,' and they seemed to me abundantly deserving of your patronage. Favor bestowed upon the fine arts is the only thing which can possibly add to the brilliancy of your renown.

"Condescend to accept, Madame, the deep respect of an aged hermit, whose heart now knows no other emotion save that of gratitude."

Public opinion was less severe upon the favorite than one would suppose. Her good fortune was forgiven because, as was commonly said, she was "a good creature,"—because "she was at heart devoted to the people, and was susceptible of natural affection and regard for the ties of blood." Every fortnight she passed a day with her mother, whom she metamorphosed into the Marquise de Montrable,

* "What! two kisses, just at the end of my life! what a passport [to the other world] you deign to send me! But two! That is one too many, adorable Egeria, for I should die of pleasure at the first."

† "You cannot forbid that mark of adoration, the feeble tribute of any one who has eyes. It is for mortals to worship your counterfeit presentiment, for the original was designed for the gods."

and whom she furnished with comfortable quarters at the Convent of St. Elisabeth, — a carriage, a country-house, and a little farm near Lonjumeau, called the "Maison Rouge."

Madame de Pompadour, the personification of the *bourgeoise parvenue*, had stirred up all ranks of society against her. The Du Barry was less obnoxious, because she was less arrogant. Moreover, her triumph was in accord with the spirit of a time when, as Chateaubriand has it, "court and city, economists and encyclopedists, great lords and gentlemen, financiers and *bourgeois*, were all alike, as is proved by the memoirs they have left us."

More and more weary of the rigid rules of etiquette, Louis XV. in his old age aspired to lead the life of a private gentleman, with liberty to love women and hunting and good cheer as long as possible. Everything magnificent was a bore: Versailles, in its vastness and majesty, was as odious as a prison to him. He much preferred to the sumptuous abode of Louis XIV. the little pavilion which was built, by his orders, in 1771, directly beside the château of Luciennes, and which was Madame du Barry's property.

There are monuments which fitly symbolize the age in which they were constructed. This palace-boudoir, the shrine of an immoral divinity, was a wonderfully accurate representation of the last years of the reign of Louis XV. The architect Ledoux was the builder of this *chef d'œuvre*, and the *salons* were decorated by the pencils of Joseph

Vernet, Greuze, and Fragonard. Situated upon an elevation which commanded a magnificent prospect, the square pavilion, with its five long windows on each side, resembled a *château d'Alcine*, or the dwelling-place of a siren. The eye was first caught by a peristyle of four columns in the Greek style, and a revel of children in bas relief. Upon entering, one found one's self in a vestibule which served as a dining-hall on great occasions. It is the apartment shown in the beautiful aquarelle of Moreau le Jeune, now owned by the Musée du Louvre. The walls were of white marble, and were onamented with the arms of Louis XV. and the favorite intertwined, and framed in gold. At one end of the vestibule was a gallery for the comtesse's musicians. This great hall opened into the *salon carré*, of which Fragonard painted the door-panels. On each side of this great *salon* was another smaller one; in that to the right was a series of four paintings by Vien, representing symbolically the story of Love in a young girl's heart; in the other, which was furnished with many mirrors, in which was reflected again and again a superb chimney-piece of lapis-lazuli in tripod shape, Briard had painted the ceiling with the allegory of Love in the country.

When Louis XV. came to Luciennes, he had no other apartments than those of the comtesse, except a room for making his toilet. He was extremely careful about his personal appearance, and required a special apartment to repair, when necessary, slight disarrangements of his make-

up, and to receive an extra touch of powder when his hair had not enough.

What a lovely, fascinating toy was this wonderful pavilion! Cornices, bas-reliefs, pilasters, specimens of the goldsmith's art, everything which met the eye was an artistic gem, even to the locks and window-fastenings. The very apotheosis of luxury! Caprice and whim and fantasy given full play in the decoration: Chinese images, statuettes of Saxony porcelain, caskets of ebony and ivory, pieces of lacquer ware, screens covered with birds of paradise with gaudy plumage, cages filled with parrots, and aviaries made of gold or silver ware.

Among these interesting curiosities were to be seen a little spaniel, white as snow, a Brazilian monkey, a flame-colored parroquet, and a young Bengalee child with dark copper-colored skin, bright black eyes, and extraordinary garb. This curious little fellow, a living toy, was Zamore, for whom the comtesse and the Prince de Conti had been the sponsors in baptism, and whom Louis XV. had amused himself by appointing governor of the pavilion of Luciennes by decree regularly countersigned by the Chancellor of France. The little negro's costume was changed as many times a day as if he were a doll. Sometimes he was dressed like a savage, with red feathers, parti-colored clothes, and a necklace of gold or coral beads. Again he wore a green frock-coat all bedizened with gold, and accompanied the running footman, who, in a coat of sky-blue cloth, brandished as he ran a magnificent cane with carved head. Again, he

would appear, in vest and hose of pink satin, at the brilliant evening parties, when the notes of violin, flute, and cornet were heard in the galleries of the vestibule, and when, amid the noble dames in their dazzling toilets and gentlemen in velvet coats, surrounded by flashing jewels, decorations, pyramids of flowers, and in the blaze of countless lights, the Comtesse du Barry shone resplendent. It was like a superbly set scene from an opera, the last word of voluptuous libertinism.

But her coquettish and frisky person did not appear at its best in fine attire. She was even prettier and more captivating when she donned the half-feminine, half-masculine uniform of the queen's light horse. It was to her in this garb that Dorat, in his enthusiasm, addressed the following poetical effusion:—

"Sur ton double portrait le spectateur perplexe,
Charmante Du Barry, vent t'admirer partout;
A ses yeux changes-tu de sexe,
Il ne fait que changer de goût.
S'il te voit en femme, dans l'âme,
D'être homme il sent tout le plaisir;
Tu deviens homme, et d'être femme,
Soudain il sent tout le désir." *

At Luciennes, Louis lived like one of the kings of finance in his little establishment. The Most Christian

* "In thy twofold guise, lovely Du Barry, the perplexed spectator knows not where to bestow his admiration; as often as thou changest thy sex, his fancy changes. If he sees thee in woman's garb, he feels in his soul all the advantage of being a man; thou becomest a man thyself, and he forthwith longs to be a woman.

King laid his majesty aside there. He wore a plain white coat, and amused himself, like any good citizen, in playing at gardening a little. He liked to walk about under his lindens, and then take a seat upon the terrace, where he could look down upon the river which lay at his feet, and which wound about the hill in a horseshoe curve. On the horizon he could see St. Germain, where Louis XIV. was rocked in his cradle, and St. Denis, his last resting-place, — St. Denis, where he too must soon go to join his ancestors; and far away, vaguely seen in the hazy distance, Paris, the malcontent and revolutionary town, which seemed always to menace his tranquillity. Upon that terrace Louis XV., wearied to distraction of Versailles, breathed the free air of heaven, and tried to forget, — to forget the mistakes of his diplomatic policy, official and secret; to forget the first partition of Poland, which was on the point of accomplishment, and the stern commands of England, which power, while preventing France from bearing aid to the Swedes and Poles, forbade her to send a fleet either to the Baltic or the Mediterranean; to forget his own declining years, and the equally deplorable decline of the French monarchy. The worn-out sovereign looked at the present with eyes from which the scales of enchantment had fallen, and the glance with which he surveyed the future was full of anxiety. But let the Comtesse du Barry draw near, with her saucy face and her provoking smile, and her red lips which ask to be kissed, — for the moment the wrinkles are smoothed from Louis' brow.

Was Madame du Barry really lower in the scale of morality than Madame de Pompadour? We do not think so. Was her influence more harmful to France? We do not think that it was. Was the source of the favor of the marquise more worthy of respect than that from which the comtesse derived her power? Was more real affection and more unselfishness exhibited by the first than by the second? For my own part, I can hardly distinguish between them. I should be inclined, however, to consider Madame de Pompadour the more guilty of the two. Her husband was a much more estimable man than Comte Guillaume du Barry. M. Lenormand d'Etioles did not, like M. du Barry, make a shameful bargain, under the name of a marriage; he loved his wife, and surrounded her with proofs of his devotion and respect. He did absolutely nothing to justify her shameful desertion of him, or the unexpected treachery of which he was the victim.

M. du Barry, on the contrary, selected his lot for himself. Whatever people may have said, the marquise was really no greater lady than the comtesse. We remember that the aristocracy looked upon her as a *bourgeoise*. D'Argenson treated her as a strumpet, and Richelieu could see in her nothing but a plaything out of her sphere, "one who was not fitted to live worthily at court." Voltaire, her flatterer in ordinary, described her as a *grisette* born to shine at the opera or in the seraglio.

The Pompadour was sufficiently refined, and the Du Barry was not less so. Both succeeded in acquiring the

language of the court, and in carrying off a grand toilet as successfully as ladies of the very highest rank. D'Aiguillon, the favorite of the comtesse, was of as ancient a family as Choiseul, whom the marquise protected. They were both equally successful in securing a place for their families among the aristocracy. Madame de Pompadour's transformation of her brother, Abel Poisson, into the Marquis de Marigny, was matched by Madame du Barry's marriage of her nephew, Vicomte Adolphe du Barry, to a daughter of the Marquis de Tournon, who was a connection of the Soubise and Condé families. The comtesse had the advantage of the marquise in that she could not be held responsible for any war, or for injudicious selection of generals.

Evil passions — hatred and malice, ambition and avarice, the spirit of domination and overbearing pride — were infinitely more active in the heart of Madame de Pompadour than in Madame du Barry's. The former was an intriguing, plotting, mercenary woman, thoroughly self-poised, selfish, arrogant, and revengeful. The other was a child of the common people, entirely without virtue, but equally free from malice; without high principle, but with no inclination to wickedness for the sake of doing evil; possessed of all the failings of the race of courtesans, but with all their thoughtlessness, prodigality, and gayety.

Therefore in the galaxy of the women of Versailles I unhesitatingly place Madame du Barry above Madame de Pompadour, because she had, if all her contemporaries are

to be believed, one quality which was lacking in the marquise, — a quality which atones for many obliquities and many vices, and without which no woman, whoever she may be, can touch a sympthetic chord: that quality is kindness of heart.

XII.

DEATH OF LOUIS XV.

LOUIS XV. had a foreboding that his end was near. Like all men who continue to lead a dissipated life when their hair has grown gray, he experienced more suffering than pleasure, more melancholy than joy, in his debauchery. Expiating a few brief moments of apocryphal enjoyment by long hours of *ennui* and discouragement, he felt the sharp pangs of fatigue, the remorse of the body; and of remorse, the fatigue of the soul.

On the 16th June, 1773, the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau wrote to Maria Theresa: "Although the king's health has not grown visibly worse the past month, it is noticeable that he is daily more subject to despondency and *ennui*. His original caprice for the favorite being weakened by lapse of time, and the woman having no means of attracting him in the infinitely slender resources of her intellect and her character, the king derives only the most moderate pleasure from her society now."

In the course of his correspondence with his sovereign, the ambassador frequently recurs to Louis' incurable depression. On the 14th August, 1773, he wrote: "The king is growing old, and seems from time to time to have strange

fancies. He is quite alone, with no comfort from his children, and no zeal or attachment or fidelity on the part of the motley assemblage which constitutes his ministry, his social circle, and his surroundings generally."

Again he wrote, February 19, 1774: "The king begins to talk now and then about his age and the condition of his health, and the frightful account he will have to settle some day with the Supreme Being of the use he has made of the time accorded him on earth. These reflections, occasioned by the recent decease of certain persons of about his age, who died almost in his presence, have caused considerable alarm to those persons who are encouraging the monarch to persevere in his present vicious courses; and each one of them is now on the watch for a safe place of shelter in possible contingencies."

Comments were freely made upon the acts and words and the secret thoughts of the king, upon his feeble impulse to revert to religious practices, the growing frequency of his visits to his daughter Louise, the Carmelite, and the humble mien with which he had listened to the words of a courageous prelate, Monseigneur de Beauvais, Bishop of Senez, who addressed him thus, in a sermon preached before the whole court: "Solomon, sated with debauchery, and having exhausted every variety of pleasure which surrounds the throne, ended by seeking some new excitement in the vile haunts of public vice."

Louis XV. was sixty-four years old. He was once more wavering, as he had often done in his youth, between vice

and virtue, when he was stricken at Petit-Trianon, on the 28th April, 1774, with a malady which immediately assumed alarming proportions. He was transported to Versailles; and immediately there ensued an exhibition of what was well called "the stock-jobbing and bargaining with the king's conscience."

The Aiguillonists and the Barriens, as the partisans of the favorite and the minister were termed, maintained that the attack was not serious, and would not listen to suggestions of the administration of the sacrament. The friends of the Duc de Choiseul, on the other hand, demanded that the king should at once receive extreme unction, which should be the signal for his mistress to be sent away. Upon this point MM. de Goncourt judiciously observe: "It came about strangely enough, that the D'Aiguillon faction, the party of he Church and the Jesuits, were in league to prevent Louis from receiving communion, while the Choiseul faction, the party of the *philosophes* and scoffers, were determined that it should be administered."

The Aiguillonists were shivering with apprehension. The king's illness was extremely serious: it was small-pox of the most malignant type. If the old monarch died, it was the end of their power; if he should recover, he would surely become religious. In either case, Madame du Barry would no longer be of any consequence.

The courtiers, fearing contagion, did not go near the sick room except with great reluctance and fear. One of them, M. de Lêtorières succumbed to the disease, simply from hav-

ing held the door half open and looked at the king for two minutes. Nearly fifty persons were taken ill from having passed through the gallery. Louis' daughters, Mesdames Adélaïde, Victoire, and Sophie, at this crisis gave an admirable exhibition of courage and filial devotion. Although they had never had the small-pox, they heroically defied the dread scourge. While the dauphin and his brothers, Comtes de Provence and d'Artois, prudently kept away, the three princesses shut themselves up unhesitatingly in their father's deserted sick-room.* There they remained from the beginning of the illness until his death.

The Archbishop of Paris, Monsigneur Christophe de Beaumont, visited the king upon the 2d of May. "Great precautions were taken," says the Baron de Besenval in his "Mémoires;" "as soon as the archbishop appeared, the Maréchal de Richelieu was seen to leave the king's suite in great haste, and go to meet him in the Salle des Gardes;† there he drew him aside, and they seated themselves upon a bench. The maréchal spoke with great earnestness, and gesticulated vehemently; although his words could not be heard, it was easy to imagine that he was trying to divert the archbishop from the idea of the sacrament."

The king did not come to any determination at once. Meanwhile the disease gained ground. In the bulletin of the 2–3d May, the physicians used the word "delirium,"—an outspoken avowal which angered the Duc d'Aiguillon.

* Salle No. 126 of M. de Soulie's "Notice du Musée."

† No. 120 of the Notice du Musée.

In the evening of the 4th, Madame du Barry was ushered into the sick room. "Madame," said the king, "I am ill: I know what I must do. I have no desire to go through the Metz performance again: we must part. Go you to M. d'Aiguillon's house at Rueil. Be assured that I shall always retain the most affectionate regard for you." The following day, at three in the afternoon, the favorite left Versailles, never to return.

Louis XV. was on his death-bed. In vain he besought his noble-hearted daughters to leave him; for the first time in their lives they disobeyed him. The old king, as Mercy-Argenteau wrote to the empress, gave "many signs of repentance and resignation." By a Christian death, he atoned for the scandals of his long life. During the night of the 5–6th May, he asked for his confessor, the Abbé Mondou. He received absolution, and at daybreak of the 6th he gave orders to have the sacraments brought to him. Witnessing the greatest impatience for their arrival, he sent M. de Beauvau many times to the window to see if the messenger of God was not on the way. At last the clergy approached with the sacraments. The dying king eagerly threw off the bed-clothing, and struggled to a kneeling posture, supporting himself against the head of the bed. When the doctors urged him to cover himself up again, "When my merciful God," said he, "confers upon such a miserable wretch as I the honor of coming to seek him, the very least that I can do is to receive him with all due respect."

After the communion, the Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon, first chaplain, read aloud the sovereign's apology to his people. "Although the king," the cardinal cried, "owes to none but God an account of his conduct, he declares that he is sorry that he has caused his subjects to blush for him." Thereupon the moribund muttered in a voice, shaken with suffering, "Say it again, Monsieur Chaplain; say those words again."

Let us confess that if Louis XV. did make a failure of his life, he at least had the merit of knowing how to die well.

A lighted candle in the chamber of death, which was to be extinguished simultaneously with the king's life, was to give the signal for the measures necessary to be taken, and the orders to be given, when he had drawn his last breath. On the 10th May, 1774, at two in the afternoon, the candle was extinguished. At once a great uproar, like the rumbling of thunder, shook the arches of Versailles. It was the mob of courtiers fleeing from the antechamber of the deceased to rush headlong to greet the new monarch. He who was henceforth to be called Louis XVI. fell instinctively upon his knees, with his wife at his side. "O God," he cried, "guide and watch over us: we are too young to reign!" At six in the evening the new king and queen set out for Choisy, and Versailles was nought but a desert.

The Comte de Ségur speaks thus, in his "Mémoires," of that sudden solitude: "Dazzled from childhood by the

brilliancy of the throne and the extent of the royal power, and having witnessed the apparent zeal, the simulated ardor, and the continual assiduity of the courtiers, and the unceasing adulation, which was like a sort of worship, the last illness and death of the king moved me to tears. What was my amazement, on hastening to Versailles, to find myself quite alone in the palace; to observe on all sides, in the city and the gardens, general indifference at least, if not a sort of delight! The setting sun was forgotten; all the worship was transferred to the newly risen luminary. Even before he was laid in the tomb, the old monarch was relegated to the ranks of his motionless and dumb predecessors. Thenceforth his reign was ancient history, and every one was engrossed with the future: the old courtiers thought of nothing but how they could best maintain their influence under the new reign, and the younger generation were bent upon supplanting them. The antidote of court prestige is a change of reign; then the heart is laid bare, and illusions cease for the time: the dead king is nothing but a common mortal, and often even less than that. There is no event better calculated to teach a moral lesson and make the judicious reflect."

Just as Louis XV. was in the agony of death, the Duc de Liancourt noticed a valet of the wardrobe weeping. "What!" said the duke, "are you weeping for your master?" "Oh, no; I am weeping for my poor comrade, who has never had the small-pox, and is going to die of it."

The king's body, hastily rolled up in the bed-clothes, was placed in a triple casket of oak and lead. Certain priests

were the only persons who were condemned to stay by the mortal remains of the wretched king, in the lighted chapel. On the 12th May, the casket was placed in a coach. In the words of the Baron de Besenval, "twenty pages, and fifty or more mounted grooms, carrying torches (neither the attendants nor the coach being in mourning), composed the entire funeral procession, which set off at a fast trot at eight in the evening, and reached St. Denis at eleven amid the jeers of the populace, who lined the road, and, under cover of the darkness, gave full vent to the propensity for fooling, which is the dominant characteristic of the French nature. Nor did they confine themselves to that; for epitaphs, placards, and verses were scattered broadcast, all tending to vilify the memory of the late king."

A letter written by the Comtesse de Boufflers to Gustavus III. on the 20th July, 1774, indicates what was at that time the feeling of a part at least of the French nobility. "After his death," says the comtesse, referring to Louis XV., "he was deserted, as is commonly the case, and in a fashion even more horrible than usual, on account of the nature of his illness. He was buried very promptly; his body passed through the Bois de Boulogne towards midnight on its way to St. Denis. . . . As it passed along, derisive cries were heard. The people shouted 'Taïaut! Taïaut!' [Tally-ho!] as when a stag is sighted, and burlesqued absurdly the tone in which the king used to say it. If this report is true, it shows much hard-heartedness; but no one on earth is more

inhuman than indignant Frenchmen, and it must be admitted that they never had more cause to be indignant. Never did a nation sensitive upon the point of honor, and a nobility naturally proud, receive a more open and less excusable insult than the late king inflicted upon us when we saw him, not content at sixty years with the scandal he had already caused by his mistresses and his harem, raise a creature of the lowest sort from the very scum, and from a life of infamy, to install her at court, admit her to sit at table with his family, make her the absolute mistress of favors and honors and rewards, of politics and laws, which she has overturned, — a catalogue of calamities which we can hardly hope to see repaired. One can but look upon this sudden demise, and the complete disbandment of that infamous troop, as a providential stroke."

If the noble classes spoke thus, what should we expect to hear from the *bourgeoisie* and the Parisian populace, always so fault-finding and so biting in its jibes? Their feelings found vent in satirical verses after the style of the following: —

"Te voilà donc, pauvre Louis,
Dans un cercueil à Saint-Denis!
C'est là que la grandeur expire.
Depuis longtemps, s'il faut le dire,
Inhabile à donner la loi,
Tu portais le vain nom de roi,
Sous la tutelle, et sous l'empire
Des tyrans qui régnaient peur toi.

Etais-tu bon? C'est un problème
Qu'on peut résoudre à peu de frais.
Un bon prince ne fit jamais
Le malheur d'un peuple qui l'aime,
Et l'on ne peut appeler bon
Un roi sans frein et sans raison,
Qui ne vécut que pour lui-même.

Faible, timide, peu sincère,
Et caressant plus que jamais
Quiconque avait su te déplaire,
Au moment que de ta colère
Il allait ressentir les traits:
Voilà, je crois, ton caractère.
Ami des propos libertins,
Buveur fameux et roi célèbre
Par la chasse et par les catins:
Voilà ton oraison funèbre!" *

Oh, ye kings! Was not Bossuet justified in saying that all your majesty is borrowed, and that, because you are seated on the throne, you are none the less seated beneath

* "So there you are, poor Louis, in a coffin at St. Denis! There grandeur must be laid aside. For a long time, if I must say it, being very awkward on the seat of government, you have simply borne the empty title of king, under the guidance and dominion of the tyrants who reigned in your stead.

"Were you a good king? That is a problem which can be solved at short notice. A good king never brings misery upon his subjects who love him, nor can one call him a good king who has no self-restraint or common-sense, and lives only for himself.

"Weak, wavering, insincere, and lavishing marks of the greatest affection upon any one who had incurred your displeasure, just when he was about to feel the weight of it, — such, in my opinion, was your character. Fond of lewd talk, a famous tippler, and a king celebrated as a huntsman and a rake: there is a funeral oration for you"

the mighty hand and supreme power of God? What reflections may we not make upon the emptiness of the grandeur of this world, the wretchedness of the life of courts, the recantations and baseness of flatterers, the shameless calculations of ambition and self-interest, and the foulness of the human heart! What a lesson! — the frightful, horrifying, repulsive death of this monarch, who had exhausted all the enjoyment and all the distraction to be secured by luxurious living and debauchery! What a contrast between the flower-strewn boudoir, brilliantly lighted and filled with sweet perfume, and the coffin in which lay rotting that "something which has no name in our tongue"! What spectacle could be at once more forbidding and more instructive than the lamentable end of that prince who had once received the surname of *Bien-Aimé*, the well-beloved?

EPILOGUE.

THE PASSING OF MADAME DU BARRY.

THE fatal year, 1793, has come. Nineteen years have passed since the death of Louis XV. But what changes those nineteen years have seen! What awful revolutionary changes! No more thrones or altars; no more aristocracy. Versailles is a desert. In the gilded galleries beds for the wounded are placed, and flocks graze in the gardens. The fountains are dry, and grass is growing between the flagstones of the courtyard. The marble statues, the bronze groups, are overturned or mutilated. The greatest crime in all French history has been perpetrated: the descendant of Saint Louis, the most Christian king, has left his head upon the scaffold.

Amid all this chaos what has become of Madame du Barry? Where must we look for that woman who did so much to help along the weakening of the monarchical principle, and thereby to bring on the final catastrophe? Since October, 1792, she has been in London. She is no *émigré*, properly speaking, and had come to a satisfactory understanding with the ruling powers of the day, before going to England to prosecute those who committed the robbery at Luciennes. The culprits crossed the Channel, and Madame du Barry has gone in quest of them.

But before we come to this pursuit, let us go back a little, and see what had been the favorite's career since the accession of Louis XVI. Exiled at first to the abbey of the Bernardines de Pont-aux-Dames in the suburbs of Meaux, she had obtained leave, after a few months, to return to her dear pavilion of Luciennes. Her financial affairs, which were badly involved, on account of her immense debts, were almost put in order. She continued to live in great style, and with a considerable establishment. Many of her courtier friends had remained true to her; and although it would appear that her royal lover had had more than one successor, she retained a sort of worldly regard for his memory. Foreigners of distinction were anxious to be presented to the late king's mistress.

When the Emperor Joseph II. came to pay a visit to his sister, Marie-Antoinette, he found his way to the pavilion of Luciennes, and walked in the garden with the Comtesse du Barry on his arm.

In her last years the comtesse made the conquest of an accomplished gentleman, the Duc de Cossé-Brissac. He was a fine specimen of the thoroughbred nobleman, brave to heroism, and exquisitely refined and courtly in manner. Not only did he take Madame du Barry seriously, but he manifested as much consideration and respect for her as if she had been of the most lofty rank. To enthusiastic admiration he added a most earnest and lasting affection. As MM. de Goncourt have well said, there was in this attachment of M. de Brissac such a complete surrender of himself, accom-

panied by such thoughtful and delicate attentions and such deep adoration, that it causes one's judgment to waver as to a woman who could make herself appear worthy of so noble a passion.

Madame du Barry, still in the bloom of her beauty, believed that she was destined to end her days in happiness and peace, because she had disarmed her bitterest enemies by her sweetness and her kind and playful disposition. Luciennes was still a palace of delight. But the tempest was muttering in the distance, and the comtesse, improvident to the last, had reckoned without the tide of revolution, which was rising ever higher, and was to end by submerging everything.

Madame du Barry did not abjure her allegiance to the court or the monarchy. The woman of the people remained a royalist, remembering that she was a countess, and had been the king's mistress. In 1789, the day after the "Days of October," she gave asylum to the body *gardes du corps* at Luciennes, and looked after their wounds with great solicitude. The queen thanked her for the courageous deed, and the ex-favorite wrote to the wife of Louis XVI. a letter, quoted in the Memoirs of the Comte d'Allonville, in which she thus expressed herself: "These wounded youths have no regret except that they could not die for a princess so deserving of universal homage as your Majesty. What I am able to do for the brave fellows is far beneath their deserts. I comfort them as best I can, and I look upon their wounds with respect, when I think, Madame, that your Majesty might not be living to-day but for their devotion.

"Luciennes is yours, Madame; for was it not your generous heart which restored it to me? All that I have comes to me from the royal family, and my gratitude is too great to allow me ever to forget it. The late king, with a presentiment of impending separation, forced me to accept from him a thousand articles of value before sending me away from him. I have had the honor already of placing these treasures at your disposal, in the time of the Notables; once more I offer them to you, Madame, and most earnestly entreat your acceptance of them. You have so many expenses, and are so tireless in generous deeds!"

In 1791 Madame du Barry passed a few days in the mansion of the Duc de Brissac at Paris. Thieves took advantage of her absence from Luciennes to break into the pavilion and steal the superb jewels which were in her chests. They transported their plunder across the Channel.

The following year the Duc de Brissac was murdered at Versailles. He left a will, wherein he said, speaking of his daughter and sole residuary legatee, Madame de Mortemart: "I earnestly commend to her a person who is very dear to me, and who may be brought to great suffering by the catastrophes of the time. My daughter will find a codicil containing my commands in this matter."

The codicil contained a considerable legacy to Madame du Barry. "I beseech her," said the duc, "to accept this feeble proof of my attachment and my gratitude, my indebtedness to her being so much the greater in that I was the involuntary cause of the loss of her diamonds; and further-

more, even if she succeeds in recovering any of them from England, the value of those unrecovered, and the expense of the various journeys she has had to make in her search, and of the premiums she will have to pay, will amount to quite as much as this legacy. I beg my daughter to persuade her to accept it. My knowledge of my daughter's heart gives me full assurance that she will see my wishes in this regard punctually executed, whatever burdens may be imposed upon her succession by my will and codicil, it being my desire that no other legacy shall be paid until this one is fully discharged."

The theft of the jewels was destined to be fatal to Madame du Barry. She was imprudent enough, even in those days of jealousy and hatred, to attract public attention to her wealth by posting upon the blank walls of Luciennes and the neighborhood a placard, which read: "Two thousand louis reward; diamonds and jewels lost." Then followed a full list of diamonds, pearls, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires.

Covetousness pricked up its ears: the village of Luciennes had its club, and the report was circulated that the comtesse possessed treasures without number, that inestimable wealth was to be found in the pavilion, that it was the mine to which the royalists came to fill their pockets, and that the comtesse was to direct the counsels and provide funds for the reactionaries.

M. Sardou has said, "When history takes to dramatic writing, it does it well." The real historical drama, which has no alloy of fiction, but adheres to truth throughout, has

its contrasts, its catastrophe, and its climax. Above all is it certain to have its traitorous characters. You remember Zamore, the Bengalese boy, whom the sovereign of Luciennes held in her arms at the baptismal font, and whom she had laden with benefactions, — the little darkie who carried the parasol over her head, and whose inky visage formed a fine background for the snow-white skin of the gorgeous comtesse? Oh, well! the little wretch was a traitor. Through his connection with the former major-domo of Madame du Barry, he became the comrade of one Greive, who thus described and signed himself: "Official defender of the brave *sans-culottes* of Luciennes, friend of Franklin and Marat, factionary and anarchist of the first rank, and the arch-enemy of despotism in two hemispheres for twenty years past." This odious gang followed the comtesse with the keenness of hatred. She was a prey which the tigers, who caught the smell of blood, soon found means to get their claws upon. Zamore had sworn that he would send his benefactress to the scaffold, and Zamore kept his word.

Madame du Barry went to England four times in search of those who stole her jewels. Her last stay on that side of the Channel lasted four months and a half, — from the middle of October, 1792, to the early part of March, 1793. How was it that this woman, who was never remarkable for personal bravery, conceived the fatal idea of returning to France? Was it that her fear that she might never again behold the hidden treasures in the pavilion of Luciennes was stronger than the dictates of prudence? Or was the victim drawn on

by inexplicable fatality, by the resistless fascination of the loadstone rock?

She left London on the 3d March, 1793, landed at Calais on the 5th, was detained there waiting for new passports until the 18th, and reached Luciennes on the 19th. She found the doors of the pavilion sealed. Zamore and his accomplices, the infamous band of servants to whom Madame du Barry had been so kind and gentle and generous, continued with infernal zeal their hateful denunciations.

On the 2d June the Convention issued a decree in these words: "The constituted authorities throughout the Republic will hold themselves in readiness to seize and place under arrest all persons notoriously suspected of incivism."

Madame du Barry's persecutors assumed authority under this decree to arrest her. Once she was released, and reinstated in her pavilion; but the hatred of her foes knew no discouragement. The wretches laid before the Convention an address, in which, speaking in the name of the "Brave *sans-culottes* of Luciennes," they demanded the arrest for good and all of a woman who, they said, "had succeeded by her great wealth and the blandishments which she had learned at the court of a weak and immoral tyrant, and in spite of her notoriously unpatriotic connections, in eluding the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and had made of her *château* the rallying point of tyrannical plots against Paris."

The Convention applauded this absurd buncombe, and congratulated the commune of Luciennes upon its patriotic spirit. The die was cast, and Madame du Barry was doomed.

On the 22d September, surrounded by gendarmes, she left the pavilion of Luciennes, which she was never to see again. She was transferred to the prison of Sainte-Pélagie, where she was confined in the cell which had been occupied by Marie-Antoinette.

What gloomy presentiments, what terror, what sinister thoughts, must have been hers! In her lonely cell, she who was once the mistress of Louis XV. could muse upon the fate of the mortal remains of her royal lover. Some days earlier, on the 10th August, the Convention had given orders for the execution of its decree for violating the sepulchres at St. Denis, — the same St. Denis which the favorite used to look upon from the terrace at Luciennes. They had exhumed "the former kings and queens, princes and princesses," had broken open the coffins, and melted down the lead. The body of Louis XV., with those of Louis XIV. and his predecessors, was tossed at random into a common trench.

The Comtesse du Barry shuddered. Now her turn had come to die. On the 7th December, 1793, at nine in the morning, she appeared, trembling with terror, before the revolutionary tribunal. Fouquier-Tinville, as public prosecutor, opened the proceedings, and in his address gave full vent to what he called "the indignation of an honest man and a good patriot." He stormed and raved in that brutal, bombastic jargon, disgusting and absurd, of which that infamous epoch alone had the secret. He declared his unwillingness, "from very modesty, to lift the veil which

ought to hide forever the unspeakable vices of the court." The modesty of Fouquier-Tinville! Heaven save the mark!

Several of the former retainers of Madame du Barry, Zamore at their head, were base enough to testify against her. The death penalty was imposed. The poor creature's cheek blanched, and her limbs shook. The gendarmes were obliged to hold her so that she might not fall. On the next day she was to take her place in the fatal tumbril, the "tomb of the living," as Barrère named it.

Mad with fear, gasping for breath, the condemned passed a night of frantic agony. She racked her brain to devise some means of prolonging her life for a few hours, or even minutes. She said that she had secrets to reveal, that she would point out the hiding-places of all her jewelry and hidden treasure at Luciennes. The public prosecutor's proxy arrived. Like one who fears that she may forget something, she went over singly all the articles which she possessed, thinking that each additional word gave her a second more of life. But the executioner was awaiting her: she must go.

It was the 8th December, 1793. Fifty-three days before, another woman, a queen, had emerged from the same cell in the same prison, also on the way to meet her doom. The tumbril was foul: a plank to sit upon, and on the plank not even a wisp of straw. Behind the victim stood Sanson, the executioner, holding the ends of a thick cord, with which the arms of the condemned queen were fastened behind her back. A poor actress had loaned her a dress,

so that she might present a decent appearance upon the scaffold. And yet, in this poor garb, amid the jeers and hooting of the mob, on a frosty morning in October, the daughter of the Cæsars was more sublime, more noble and majestic, than upon the throne. Clothed in white, like a spectre, her face of a deathlike pallor, except for a touch of red upon the cheek-bones, bloodshot but tearless eyes, hair bleached by sorrow, she remained to the last calm, serene, and noble-hearted, gazing mildly and pityingly upon the infernal uproar by which she was surrounded. For a single instant only did her features betray emotion. As the tumbril passed through Rue Saint Honoré, opposite the Oratoire, a baby in its mother's arms threw a kiss to the queen; and at this greeting from an innocent child, Marie-Antoinette wept.

Upon reaching Calvary, she gazed sadly upon that sacrilegious spot, the scene of her husband's execution, the accursed place where, twenty years earlier, had occurred the catastrophe which foreboded the evil to come. She turned her eyes towards the cemetery of La Madeleine, where the victims of that casualty were interred, and where her own headless body was soon to be laid. Then she cast a last glance upon the Tuileries, which had held so much misery for her, — the Tuileries, her first place of confinement; and as she looked, she accidentally trod upon the executioner's foot, and said, with queenly courtesy: "I beg your pardon, Monsieur." She died; but it was a hero's, a martyr's death. She died; but her blood wrapped her in a new royal cloak,

and her severed head was encircled with a halo of glory which will glow from generation to generation. She died; but the pure and radiant angels bore her white soul to heaven!

Madame du Barry did herself no more than justice. She felt that it was not in her power to meet death as nobly as her royal mistress had met it. In her case it was not the passing of a saint to heaven, but the expiation of a sinner. The wife of Louis XVI. looked death calmly in the face; but the mistress of Louis XV. had not the courage to do the same. She was terrified, she sobbed, and uttered such heartrending shrieks that even the pitiless Terror itself was touched for the first time. As the cart passed in front of the Palais-Royal, the victim noticed the balcony of a milliner's shop where several of the women were watching the ghastly procession. She recognized the house, — it was the same in which, as a young girl, she had worked as a milliner's apprentice. Alas! why had she ever become Madame la Comtesse du Barry?

Her face was by turns deathly pale and deeply flushed. She struggled wildly with the executioner and his two assistants, who could with difficulty keep her on the seat. Her shrieks redoubled in force. "Life! life!" she cried; "give me my life, and I will give all my estate to the nation!" Thereupon a man in the crowd retorted, "That would be giving the nation only what already belongs to it, for the tribunal has confiscated your property." A coal-heaver, standing in front of the speaker, turned and struck him. The victim renewed her entreaties. "My friends,"

she cried, "my friends, I have never harmed a soul! In Heaven's name I implore you to save me!"

Who can say? Perhaps the knitting-women themselves, the furies who licked the blood from the guillotine, might have been moved by these pitiful appeals from the woman of the people. This time it was not a queen who was about to die: it was a countess, but a countess who had been a work-woman. The horses were urged on, and the *dénouement* accelerated, to put an end to the sympathy of the mob.

At last the tumbril arrived upon the *place*, formerly called Place Louis XV. On the spot where the statue of the monarch used to stand, stood the scaffold on which his mistress was to die. It was half after four. "Help!" she shrieked; "help! mercy, mercy, Monsieur the executioner, one moment —" The knife fell, and Madame du Barry had ceased to live.

Were we not justified in saying, as we did at the beginning of this study, that history is one long funeral oration? Ah, there are tears in all things, as Virgil hath it, and whatever is mortal touches our soul!

"Sunt lacrymæ rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt."

If one confines his attention to the superficial aspect of an epoch, he remains unmoved and indifferent; but let him extend his investigations beneath the surface, make his way into men's souls, listen attentively to the voices from beyond the grave, to the lamentations and cries of agony issuing

from the gulf of the past, and he finds himself the prey of unconquerable but helpful sadness. He learns, to use the words of Bourdaloue, "that all the grandeur of which the world boasts, and upon which the pride of men feeds; that the illustrious birth in which mortals take pride, the influence which they assume to possess, the authority which they plume themselves on, the success which they boast, the dignities and honors in which they find their profit, and the beauty, the valor, and the reputation which they idolize, — that all is but a lie."

The lessons which history teaches are no less instructive nor less eloquent than the best sermons of the finest preachers. Every man's destiny has its moral, and no man dies that there is not a lesson to be drawn from his death. It is as if one were encompassed by a multitude of phantoms, pale some, and others bleeding, whose tomb-like appearance makes one tremble, and who say in their sepulchral accent: 'O man, remember that thou art dust, and to dust shalt thou return." "Memento, homo, quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris."

There they stand, these women of Louis XV.'s court, those royal mistresses, once so fawned upon, who appear once more, and for the last time, and say to us in turn a last word.

"I," — it is the Comtesse de Mailly who speaks, — "when I was cast off by an earthly king, found comfort at the feet of the King of Heaven. I bitterly and sincerely grieved for my sins, and God in his mercy vouchsafed to give me time to repent."

"I," says the Comtesse de Vintimille, "had barely crossed the threshold of the accursed palace of Versailles, when I was struck down as by a thunder-bolt, and died in giving birth to the child of my sin."

"And I too," says the Duchesse de Châteauroux, "passed away like the grass of the field, between sunrise and sunset. Broken by insult and suffering, I lost my wretched sceptre; and just as I was on the point of assuming it again, I died, in the flower of my youth, and shrouded in my shameful triumph as in the most sombre of grave-clothes."

"In my twenty years of power," says the Marquise de Pompadour, "I did not for one single moment know what true happiness was. I had everything except esteem, which cannot be bought. Beneath my scheming and my supposititious pleasures, I found nothing but emptiness. My conscience spoke louder than my flatterers, and I realized my own wretched condition. My life, so brilliant on the surface, was filled with gloom and sadness within. As a sorceress had foretold, I died of disappointment pure and simple."

"I," says the Comtesse du Barry, the last of the royal mistresses, whose punishment was in a measure a summing up of all the atonements,—"I paid dearly for the sweets of luxury and debauchery; I knew not how to live or to die. At a time when heroism had become common, I was weak and cowardly, and trembled like a leaf upon the scaffold!"

We have listened to the favorites, and it is now the turn of the monarch whose shameful passion was the source of all their woes. What says he? "Like the Ecclesiast, I have

seen everything under the sun, and have found that all was vanity and vexation of spirit. I voluntarily became the victim of guilty passions, which, when the brief period of intoxication was past, left in the mind only grievous torpor and a deeply felt void. I became disgusted with others and with myself; I ceased to believe in the prestige of my own crown, and despite my wealth and power, and my ability to gratify all my whims, I became the very incarnation of that corroding disease, *ennui*. If my weakness occasioned scandal, bitter was my chastisement. I have been punished in my own person and in my family, — punished as man and as king."

When we study these lessons of history and of death in the solitude of our hearts and minds, we may well reflect, and upon reflection may esteem the problems of human destiny less insoluble than they now seem; and when we reach the point from which such matters should be regarded, we shall discover, as Bossuet says, that that which seems at first to be hopeless confusion, is in fact a perfect system, hidden, to be sure, but of combinations admirably ordained by Providence. Then worldly greatness will appear in its true light, and we shall be conscious of feeling more tranquil, less ambitious, and less inclined to complain of the unequal dispensations of fate. The shades of princes and princesses, of great lords and ladies, have a mysterious language of their own, and all unite in repeating these words from the "Imitation of Jesus Christ," the most touching and saintly of all books except the Holy Gospel: —

"It is vanity to do nought but amass wealth, and build one's hopes thereon.

"It is vanity to do nought but strive after worldly honors, and to raise oneself to the highest posts.

"It is vanity to follow only the desires of the flesh, and to love that which will cause severe punishment to be visited upon us hereafter.

"It is vanity to sigh for long life, and to take so little care to live an honorable one.

"It is vanity to think only of the present, and not prepare for the future.

"It is vanity to love only that which passeth so quickly away, and not to strive with all our might to win a home in heaven, where joy will endure forever."

INDEX.